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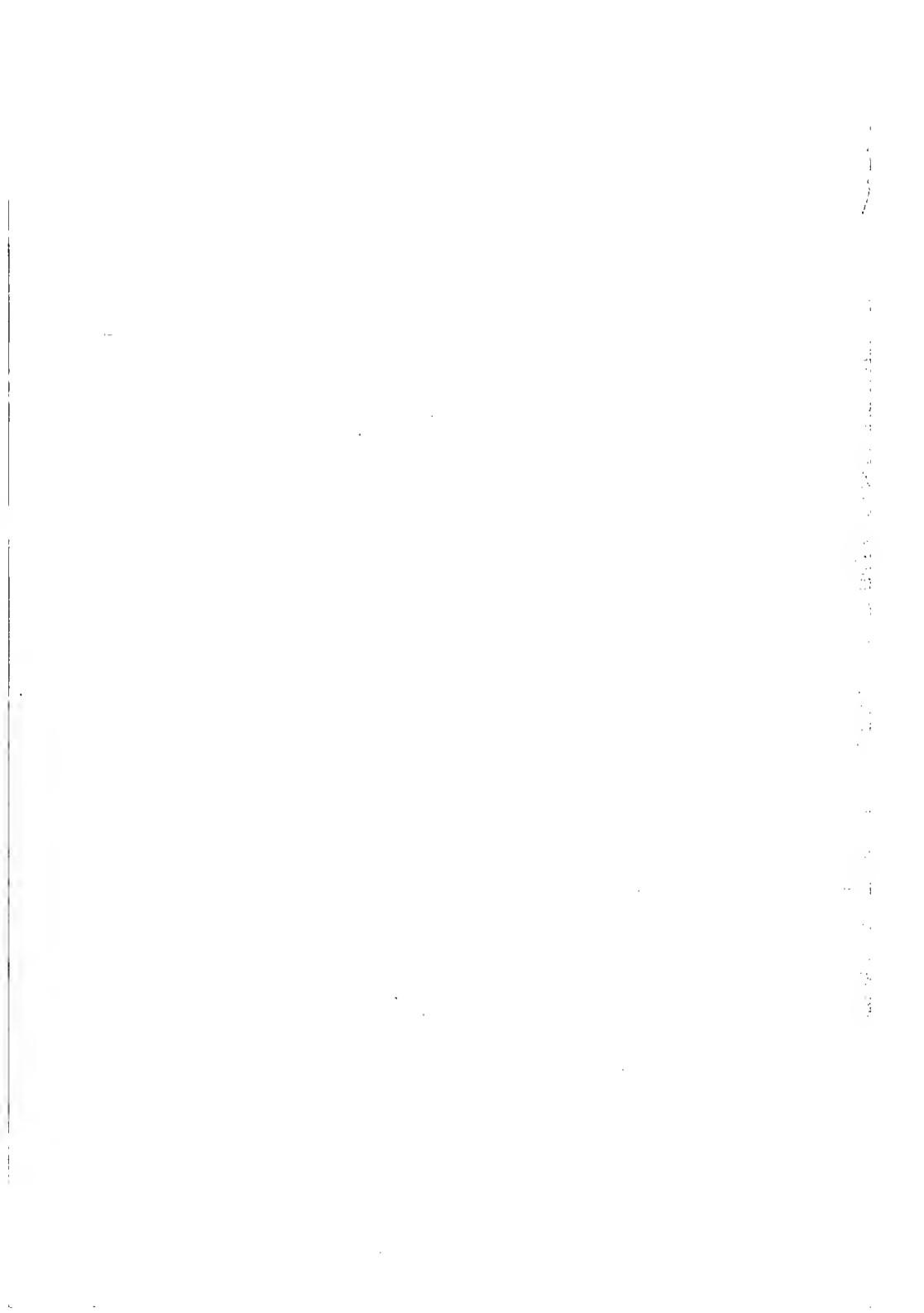
EXPOSING THE MYTH BEHIND THE NARRATIVE

KHALID BASHIR AHMAD



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First published in 2017 by



SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd
B1/I-1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area
Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044, India
www.sagepub.in

SAGE Publications Inc
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320, USA

SAGE Publications Ltd
1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road
London EC1Y 1SP, United Kingdom

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte Ltd
3 Church Street
#10-04 Samsung Hub
Singapore 049483

Published by Vivek Mehra for SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd, typeset in 11/13 pt Adobe Garamond by Diligent Typesetter India Pvt Ltd, Delhi and printed at Saurabh Printers Pvt Ltd, Greater Noida.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Name: Ahmad, Khalid Bashir, author.

Title: Kashmir : exposing the myth behind the narrative / Khalid Bashir Ahmad.

Description: New Delhi, India ; Thousand Oaks, California : SAGE Publications India Pvt Ltd, 2017. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017002728 | ISBN 9789386062802 (print) | ISBN 9789386062819 (ePub) | ISBN 9789386062826 (e-book)

Subjects: LCSH: Jammu and Kashmir (India)—Historiography. | Kashmiri

Pandits—Historiography. | Historiography—Political aspects—India—Jammu and Kashmir. | Myth—Political aspects—India—Jammu and Kashmir.

Classification: LCC DS485.K25 A54 2017 | DDC 954/.60072—dc23 LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2017002728>

ISBN: 978-93-860-6280-2 (PB)

SAGE Team: Rajesh Dey, Alekha Chandra Jena, Megha Dabral and Ritu Chopra

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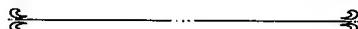
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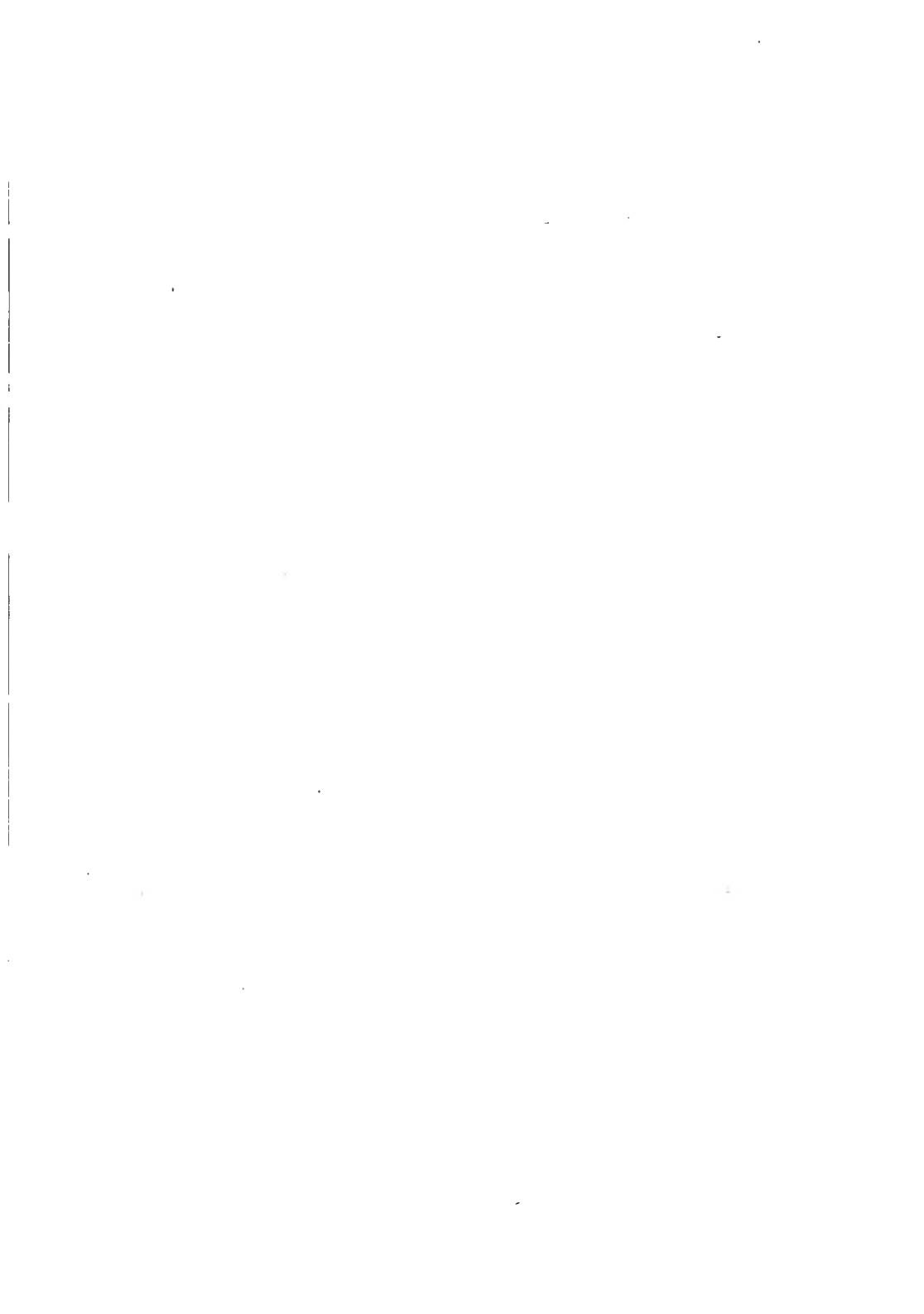
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Acknowledgements

The transformation of Kashmir from a Hindu to a Muslim society during the 14th–15th century AD gave birth to a narrative according to which the Muslim rulers forcibly converted and evicted Hindus from Kashmir and destroyed their religious icons. A minuscule minority of Brahmins, who did not change their faith, based this narrative almost entirely on the observations of a chronicler, Jonaraja, who lived during the early years of Islam in Kashmir and was not at ease with it. The narrative became the hallmark of the Brahman discourse on medieval Kashmir which looks at the five centuries of Muslim rule only as a period of persecution.

Through medieval Kashmir, the narrative made its way to the present times, and in the course, new elements were added to it. Following the eruption of armed insurgency in Kashmir and mass migration of Kashmiri Pandits in 1990, this community narrative got spiced up with additional tales, acting as the foreword of the existing debate on Kashmir. Broadly, the narrative is about the Kashmiri Pandits being the inheritors of a 5,000-year-long history and the only aborigines of Kashmir who were repeatedly persecuted by Muslim rulers and compatriots, forcibly converted to Islam—their temples were destroyed too—and repeatedly chased away from Kashmir, for the latest time in 1990.

Kashmir: Exposing the Myth behind the Narrative attempts to blow away the fog over the realities of Kashmir and questions the ‘facts’ that have traditionally populated the mythology of the existing narrative. It analyses the Kashmiri Pandit community narrative in the light of historical material and digs out many fallacies by cross-referencing, as is done in widely accepted practices of historiography. The research for the book pits opposite interpretations of same events which have

been twisted out of context against what they actually were about. It dissects the stereotype created by historians and others, who have hammered in ahistorical perceptions over a long period of time, by providing suitable representations of some facts and myths through a dispassionate contextual reading of them. Due care has been taken to glean facts from authentic sources and sufficiently reference the arguments. This work is supported by over one thousand references. The objective is to tell fact from fiction and look at events as they occurred, rather than as they have been told. The historical facts discussed here have been overlooked or kept under wraps for a very long time to perpetuate a suitable community narrative.

The scope of the book extends from prehistoric Kashmir right to the present times; this has been achieved by using available Palaeolithic evidence as well as ancient texts. For the contemporary period, this work also relies on interviews of witnesses and an extensive archive of journalistic writing and reportage. The main theme consistently running through the chapters of this book is an attempt to interrogate a historiography that has gone almost unchallenged, and to similarly interrogate the existing Pandit community narrative, how it has been perpetuated, and to explore contradictions and their sources within that narrative.

I am extremely thankful to my friends, colleagues and people with information and understanding who shared their views, gave suggestions or made relevant material available during my research.

Professor Mohammad Ashraf Wani, former Head, Department of History, University of Kashmir, and his worthy predecessor Dr Abdul Qaiyum Rafiqi are specially thanked for giving valuable suggestions, thus enhancing the merit of this work. Professor Wani's scholarly labour *Islam in Kashmir* clears many a misconception implanted by motivated writers in the story of mass conversion of Hindus in medieval Kashmir.

Peerzada Mohammad Ashraf deserves my sincere thanks for always being ready to help with whatever relevant material he could lay his hands on. He was very helpful in adding to the research element of this work.

Zahoor Ahmad Shora, Editor, *Daily Roshni*, provided old files of his newspaper pertaining to the developments of 1967, and I warmly acknowledge his help.

Muhammad Shafi Zahid, Director, State Department of Archives, Archaeology and Museums, allowed access to archival material important for my research, which is highly appreciated.

I am especially thankful to Mufti Bashiruddin, Advocate Tassaduq Hussain, Mohammad Sayeed Malik, Jalaluddin Shah, Anwar Asahi, Professor Aijaz A. Bandey, Professor Shafi Shauq, Professor Gulshan Majeed and Dr Abdur Rashid Lone, interactions with whom were very helpful.

I am also grateful to my brother Dr M. I. Bhat for going through the draft and suggesting improvements. His co-authored research paper, in contrast to what has been suggested through the centuries, explains the damages suffered by ancient temples in Kashmir.

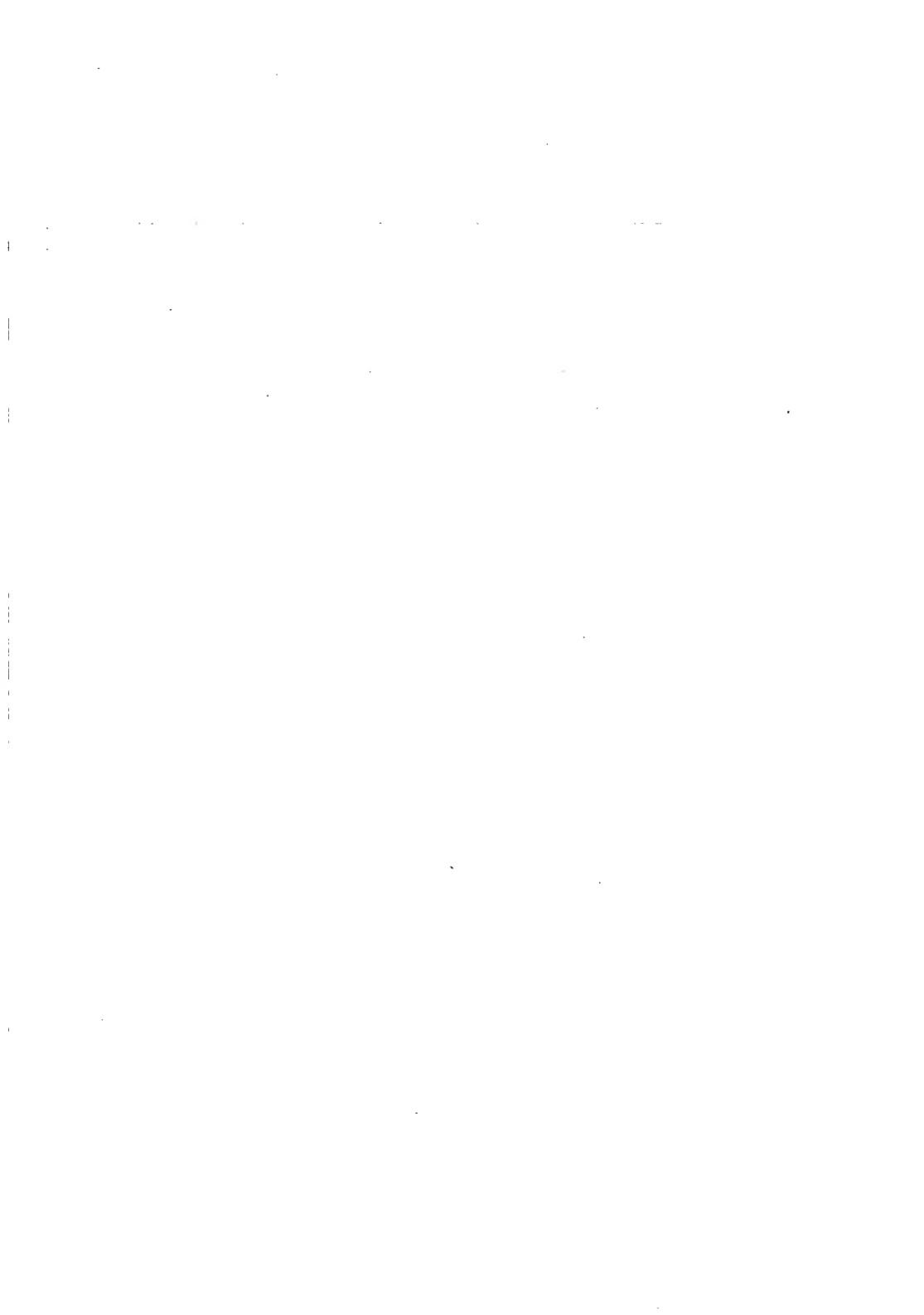
My special thanks to Parvaiz Bukhari for his valuable inputs and to Masood Hussain, Yusuf Jameel and Ajaz Hussain for some useful suggestions.

Thanks are also due to Dr Naseema Akhtar for arranging scanned copies of some important reference books and newspapers, which were of great help; to Brij Krishan Dass and Khalid Hussain for sharing eyewitness accounts of the Pandit Agitation of 1967; and to Qurat ul Ain for sharing some write-ups by her late brother Shamim Ahmad Shamim.

Shabir Mujahid, Ghulam Jeelani Khan, Bilal Khurshid, Muhammad Ashraf Tak, Mohiuddin Reshi and Haroon Rashid deserve my thanks for constantly nudging me for early completion of the book.

I also acknowledge with thanks the assistance provided by the staff of SRS Library, Jammu; SPS Library, Srinagar; and the archives repositories of Kashmir and Jammu in accessing books and records relevant to the present subject.

Last but not least, my sincere thanks go to SAGE team, especially Sharmila Abraham, Rajesh Dey, Alekha Chandra Jena and Megha Dabral for recognizing the merit of this work and seeing it through print.



Prologue

Situated between the Greater Himalayas and the Pir Panjal mountain range in the north-western region of the Indian subcontinent, Kashmir is predominantly a Muslim-inhabited land. It is a lush valley and a part of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir which, in international jargon, is still referred to as Kashmir to denote the entire territory. The seat of power of the Dogra rulers till 1947 was known as the *Kashmir Darbar*, giving an idea about the whole princely state. In this work, however, Kashmir has been used to refer to the Valley of Kashmir—a distinct cultural and geographical entity with its people speaking an ancient language. The land, whose beauty has found elaborate mention in many a work of prose and verse, is known today more for the dispute over it, arising out of the Partition in 1947 between India and Pakistan. India administers the Himalayan valley and claims the territory as its integral part, while Pakistan describes it as its jugular vein without which the country would be incomplete. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, the dispute was debated several times at the United Nations, and the world body asked for a plebiscite to decide the rival claims by the two countries. This, however, was not to happen. The two South Asian nuclear-armed neighbours have fought three wars for the ownership of Kashmir, besides coming close to a nuclear conflagration in the recent past, and have held series of unsuccessful bilateral negotiations to address the issue.

Historically, Kashmir has seen three major religions gaining ascendancy in this tiny country. It is a tale of conflict and confluence among Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. According to a popular mythological account, the earliest people of the land are known as the *Nagas* or the snake worshippers. Buddhism achieved pre-eminence and remained the reigning religion of Kashmir for over a millennium until it was obliterated by militant Hinduism. Subsequently,

Hinduism dominated the scene through its indigenous form *Shaivism*. However, by the 12th century AD, it was on decline due to rampant corrupt practices by its followers. By then, Islamic influence had made inroads into the otherwise landlocked country. Muslim adventurers had trickled in and were employed in their armies by local Hindu rulers. By the 14th century, Muslim preachers from Central Asia were also attracted to Kashmir. They gradually earned mass conversion of local people to Islam. Notably, one of the earliest converts was the ruler of the day himself—Rinchana.

For its natural splendour, Kashmir has always remained an object of greed and desire for conquerors and, consequently, a target of external aggression and occupation. A few centuries before and after the birth of Jesus Christ, Ashoka and Kanishka, respectively, grabbed Kashmir. In the 6th century AD, Mihirakula, along with his marauding hordes from the plains of India, descended on and captured the land. The Mughal occupation of Kashmir in 1586 AD brought an end to its independent status and set in a long period of subjugation, the darkest phase of which began with the onset of the Afghan rule. The occupation assumed the most heinous form during the Sikh and Dogra tyrannies. There was hardly any cruelty in its extreme form that the people of Kashmir were not subjected to by successive rulers. Today, the civilized world upholding the principle of human dignity would find it difficult to digest that in the mid-19th century, when it was waking up to the idea of human equality and freedom, Kashmir, along with its inhabitants and resources, was sold by the ‘Mother of Democracy’—the Great Britain—to a warlord for a sum of 7.5 million *Nanakshahi* rupees. For a century, Gulab Singh and his dynasty skinned and threw in boiling oil their purchased subjects for as ordinary a ‘crime’ as catching a fish from a river or slaughtering a domestic animal to fight starvation. The Mughals, Afghans, Sikhs and Dogras ruthlessly administered Kashmir and its people for four centuries before a freshly independent India arrived in October 1947.

For an overwhelming part of its history, Kashmir remained colonized and its natives disempowered. The earliest historical accounts do not provide any clue about the origin of Kashmir’s ancient rulers, save a few such as Kanishka, Ashoka and Mihirakula—the invaders who conquered and ruled the land. Likewise, the Lohars came from Poonch,

Rinchana from Tibet, the Shah Mirs from Swat and the Chaks from Dardistan—all neighbouring lands. The Mughals, Afghans, Sikhs and Dogras too were outsiders who subjugated Kashmir. Again, from the day Kashmir got its first Muslim ruler in the 14th century AD, not a single Muslim from the local stock of the mainland Kashmir ever became its ruler. When the Tatar warlord Zulchu and his horde descended on Kashmir, its ruler Sahadeva fled to Kishtwar and a Tibetan fugitive by the name of Rinchana appeared on the scene and helped Sahadeva's commander Ramachandra to ensure some semblance of normalcy. However, the two fell out, and Rinchana killed Ramachandra, ascended the throne and married his daughter, Kota Rani. Rinchana embraced Islam and thus became the first Muslim ruler of Kashmir.

Rinchana's reign lasted for a brief spell. Upon his death, Kashmir reverted to a Hindu rule for a short period before a foreign wazir of Queen Kota Rani, Shah Mir, deposed her and imposed himself on the throne in 1339 AD. He assumed the name of Shamsuddin Shah Mir and founded the Muslim Sultanate in Kashmir. The Shah Mir dynasty ruled for over two centuries. The prominent kings of this dynasty include Sultan Shahabuddin, Sultan Qutubuddin, Sultan Sikandar and Sultan Zainul Aabideen. The last years of the Shah Mir reign were a period of weak rulers who danced to the tunes of the nobility so much so that Ali Chak, one of the prominent nobles of the time, in an open court took off the crown from the head of Habib Shah and placed it on the head of his own brother Ghazi Chak, declaring him the king. This brought Kashmir under the rule of the Chak dynasty for the next 26 years until the Mughals came in 1586 AD. The Chaks came from Dardistan which comprises northern areas of Pakistan and northern Kashmir beyond the Rajdhan Pass. It includes Chitral, the upper reaches of the Panjkora River, Kohistan (highland) of Swat and the upper portions of the Gilgit Agency. The language of the Shah Mirs and Chaks, like the Mughals who succeeded them, was Persian, not Kashmiri. The Chak rule came to an end with the invasion of Akbar, the Mughal emperor, in 1586 AD. The arrival of the Mughals obliterated whatever pretence the Shah Mirs and Chaks might have had of attaining the status of naturalized Kashmiris by settling down in Kashmir over a period of time.

For the next 166 years, the Mughals ruled Kashmir less with compassion and more with an iron fist. In 1752 AD, they were driven out by the Afghans whose misrule over Kashmir lasted for 67 years. The Afghans were replaced by the Sikhs in 1819 AD who misgoverned Kashmir for 27 years till the infamous Treaty of Amritsar was signed in 1846 AD between British India and the Dogra ruler of Jammu Gulab Singh, under which the British sold Kashmir to Gulab Singh. The Dogras enslaved Kashmir for 100 years until newly independent India appeared on the scene in 1947 AD. For the past seven decades, Kashmir has undergone interchanging periods of relative calm and an all-out conflict. In 1989, Kashmir erupted violently against the Indian rule. Today, Kashmir is the world's most militarized area. Violence has killed tens of thousands of civilians during the past 27 years.

Kashmir is known to have a long recorded history. Its first widely known narrative, the *Rajatarangini*, was compiled by Kalhana, a 12th century AD local versifier. The fascinating narrative, spanning over four millennia, is sometimes strikingly precise but generally incredibly fictional. In it, there are characters in flesh and blood, and there are also supernatural beings with their paranormal actions. Kings take the form of gods, and gods come down from the heavens to deliver justice to wronged people. All this runs through the *Rajatarangini* as ink through the pen of the chronicler. An examination of the *Rajatarangini* reveals that it elevates mixing of fiction and history to an art form. Not surprisingly then, Kalhana's successors allowed sizeable room to myth and fiction in recording past events. Interpolation and contextual corruption further chipped at the recorded history of Kashmir. While the account of the earliest period was a free run of imagination, textual corruption in the account of the medieval period was not uncommon. Even religious texts like the *Nilamata Purana* could not escape interpolation. Aurel Stein observes that the text of the *Nilamata* is "in a very bad condition, owing to numerous lacunae and textual corruption of all kinds" and it appeared to him that "by no means improbable that the text has undergone changes and possibly additions at later periods."¹ Consequently, the Kashmir story, for long, has remained a blend of fact and fiction, with imaginary tales passed off as historical facts and events interpreted inversely. The *Rajatarangini* has attained the status of a scripture

that has to be believed without question. The result is that writing about the origin, history and geography of Kashmir has turned out to be a copy–paste exercise. There has been no or very little attempt to judge or analyse the ‘celebrated’ work for its accuracy, with the result that even today when we talk about Kashmir, we have to read about its past through the lexicon of the Hindu mythology only.

The earliest Brahman chroniclers do not provide us any view of Kashmir under Buddhism—a reigning religion in Kashmir for over a millennium—or its subsequent annihilation by militant Hinduism. Moreover, we do not know about the missing Buddhist relics that would have been aplenty in Kashmir during the heydays of the religion in a country where the ruler of the day organized the Universal Conference on Buddhism, which fixed and expounded the Sacred Canon.² Kalhana’s successors, such as Jonaraja and Srivara, were witnesses to the decline of Hinduism and the rise of Islam in Kashmir. Both were personally hurt by this phenomenal change that transformed the political and religious landscape of Kashmir. Sadly, this hurt appears to have taken the better of their narratives. Jonaraja saw three Muslim rulers on the throne of Kashmir but appears reluctant to mention the word ‘Muslim’, notwithstanding the fact that during his time the word *musalmaan* was in use in the local language, as is evidenced by a verse of the contemporary mystic poetess Lal Ded:

*Shiv chhui thali thali rozaan
Mo zaan hyond te musalmaan*

[Do not differentiate between a Hindu and a Muslim. For, He, who created them all, is watching you everywhere.]

The establishment of the Muslim rule in Kashmir brought to the fore a new breed of chroniclers who broke from the tradition of recording events in Sanskrit and instead chose Persian, the court language of new rulers. These Muslim chroniclers, writing essentially about their own times, lifted the narrative about prehistoric Kashmir, as it was, from their Brahman predecessors and carried it forward along with its overriding part of myth and fiction. Through them, however, we come to know about the changed social landscape of Kashmir following the advent of the Muslim rule which Jonaraja and Srivara had

more or less not touched upon in their chronicles. The termination of the Muslim rule in 1819 AD again gave ascendancy to the Brahman historiographers. By then, the recording of events had somewhat come of age and largely met the standard requirements of historiography. However, the personal biases and prejudices of scribes found way into their texts. Thus, we see writer and author Pandit Anand Koul trying to pull a rabbit out of his hat by alluding to a presumption, obviously his own, that the famous Pathar Masjid in Srinagar was built out of the stones of the stairs leading to the Shankaracharya Temple.³ The sole evidence the ‘historian’ relies on to make this sweeping conclusion was the three-letter assumption “it is said.” Obviously, he was only sowing seeds of suspicion in the minds of his readers while narrating history. Pertinently, no chronicle of Kashmir, ancient or medieval, records a set of stairs having been built up to the Shankaracharya Temple. It was only in the middle of the 19th century that Gulab Singh (1846–57) constructed a stone staircase up to the shrine.⁴ Koul, who has embellished his work with many imaginary tales, however, conveniently forgets to mention that the stone slabs in the courtyard of the same Pathar Masjid were uprooted during the Sikh period, when the mosque was converted into a grain store, and used to build a flight of steps on the river bank at Basant Bagh.

Assumptions being the basis of conclusions drawn by most of our modern writers and historians, the practice neither began with Koul nor ended with him. Everybody who took upon him- or herself the responsibility of narrating the Kashmir story fully used his or her creative skills. Take, for instance, this retired horticulture officer who, writing about Kashmir’s celebrated tree chinar in the year 2002, suddenly changes track to lambast Sultan Sikandar, the 14th century ruler of Kashmir, for destroying temples which either were demolished before him or existed even after him. The writer rests his argument on the premise that since Sikandar destroyed temples, the chinars there “too must have been dealt with in the same way as temple structures.”⁵ Although the kings of the medieval period, Sikandar in particular, became the main target of a twisted narrative, the accusations levelled against them—persecution and forced migration of Hindus and destruction of their temples—returned as the core of the storyline since 1990. If a Muslim ruler of yore was posthumously held guilty

for these alleged crimes, his coreligionists face the same accusation six centuries after him. Kashmir, in short, continues to be a story largely based on hearsay rather than actual events.

The celebrated specimens of the recorded history of Kashmir are texts in verse which, in most part, suffer from serious shortcomings. Broadly, these can be identified as myth, prejudice, fiction and exaggeration. The earliest period, with the *Rajatarangini* as its record keeper, is weird owing to a heavy dose of myth. It is a free run of imagination wrapped in beliefs and perceptions of the versifier. The period, comprising a long era of about 3,000 years of the Gonandiya dynasty, is a description of persons and events that, in the words of Stein, can rarely be traced in other sources. Scholars have expressed serious doubts about the credibility of an overwhelming part of the work. Between Kalhana and the second crop of historians, there is a gap of three centuries (1150–1459 AD) during which no chronicle is known to have been written. The absence of a parallel narrative for such a long interlude saw the *Rajatarangini* attaining a reverential status. Moreover, it set a precedence of recording events in a manner in which the chronicler let his imagination run free.

The medieval period is distinguished by profound prejudice entering the works on Kashmir's history. This specifically pertains to the 14th–15th century period when Kashmir underwent a religious and social transformation, and the chroniclers of the period—Jonaraja and Srivara—were finding it hard to reconcile with the developing situation. An acute sense of loss of power and influence by their community adversely affected their works. Following the footsteps of Kalhana, medieval Sanskrit chroniclers also indulged in myth and fiction, which they cocktailed with prejudice. The followers of a new religion—different from the one practised by these scribes—that had taken root in Kashmir and was fast branching out became the object of bias. The prejudice manifested itself, on the one hand, in demonizing rulers like Sikandar and, on the other hand, in blacking out what represented the positive side of the Muslim rule or significant events related with it. Complete silence over construction of the Jama Masjid, the Khanqah-i-Mualla and a structurally small but historically very important mosque on the Takht-e-Sulaiman, and the presence of iconic personalities such as Sheikh Nooruddin or Mir Saiyid Ali

Hamdani on the social and religious landscape of Kashmir are some of the cases in point.

The establishment of the Sultanate saw the arrival of Muslim chroniclers who spared the Muslim rulers of unwarranted criticism. Generally, they recorded events and personalities fairly but, importantly, did not question or attempt to correct the overriding content of fiction and mythology in the earliest narratives. They carried forward their predecessors' observations about the previous Muslim rulers, especially Sikandar, almost with zest, perhaps in the misplaced belief of the kings having performed a religious duty. Saiyid Ali, a 16th century AD Persian chronicler, for instance, "is simply repeating the statement of Jonaraja"⁶ when he writes that "in every village and town, where a temple existed it was demolished."⁷ The anonymous author of the 17th century AD Persian text *Baharistan-i-Shahi* is another instance.⁸ However, we find that the chronicles of this period recorded events and lives and accomplishments of Muslim rulers and hundreds of Muslim missionaries who changed the social and religious landscape of Kashmir. Their work was contemptuously ignored by Brahman chroniclers.

The return of the Hindu rule in the 19th century was followed by the reappearance of Brahman chroniclers. A series of historians and non-historians in persons of Anand Koul, P. N. K. Bamzai, Jia Lal Kilam, R. K. Parimu and others sanctified the mythological and imaginary content in ancient history and added exaggeration to the narrative. In their works, the Muslim rule spanning about five centuries, barring a brief spell under Zainul Aabideen, is the darkest phase in the life of a Kashmiri Brahman. In building their story, they ignored historical or circumstantial evidence that presents itself as a counterargument. Significantly, they also put under wraps severe and prolonged oppression of Muslims at the hands of their non-Muslim rulers. If it was not for the European travellers arriving in Kashmir in the 19th and early 20th centuries and their travelogues and books on what they observed, the most heinous cruelties ever suffered by mankind would have remained unknown to the outside world.

For several centuries, the history of Kashmir has remained under the occupation of Brahman writers who converted it into a story of the so-called aboriginal Hindus—'the inheritors of five millennia

of uninterrupted history’—their forcible conversion, periodic uprooting and destruction of temples. For them, the 500 years of Muslim rule exists only as a grim reminder of the long-drawn-out persecution. Even about the period following its replacement by the non-Muslim (Sikh and Dogra) rule in 1819 AD, they allege discrimination and oppression. Somewhere in the middle of the 20th century, journalists from the community, which held monopoly on the profession, chipped in to help create an image of Kashmir that was far from reality. The bias they brought into the narrative also found way into the official publications printed after the termination of the Hindu rule in 1947 and formation of a ‘popular government’. A specimen of this misrepresentation is *Keys to Kashmir* published in 1955 by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir.⁹ The book perpetuates the Hindu mythology and narrates factually incorrect historical events.¹⁰ Significantly, it mentions festivals of the minority community in greater number and detail, with dates and occasions, while only a couple of those of the majority community are dealt with in single sentences.

Notes and References

1. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, vol. II, 377.
2. *Ibid.*, 355.
3. “It [Pather Masjid] was constructed by Queen Nur Jahan, and it is said the stones of the stairs, which led up to the top of the Shankaracharya hill, were used in building it” (Koul, *Geography of the Jammu and Kashmir State*, 150).

Although Anand Koul is a Kashmiri Pandit who lived in a Muslim locality close to the Pathar Masjid. He must have seen the Pathar Masjid umpteen times during his long life. Till date, nobody has observed a sculptured stone used in its construction. Not to speak of stones, I say not a single stone. Noor Jahan used the same chiselled and sparkling stones in its construction which were used by the Mughal rulers in the construction of royal fortresses, *baladaris* and mosques. (Ahmad, *Tarikh-i-Hassan* [Kashmiri], Annotation, vol. I, Part II, 799–800)

4. *Koshur Encyclopaedia*, vol. I, 304.
5. Wanchoo, *Chinar Tree, “Bouin” of Kashmir*.
6. Ali, *Tarikh-i-Kashmir*, Trans. Rafiqi, e.n. 70, 182.
7. *Ibid.*, 121.

8. The *Baharistan-i-Shahi* was written in 1614 AD, exactly two centuries after Sikandar had died. The ‘loud manner’ in which the author extols the propagation of the Shia sect of Islam in Kashmir by Shamsuddin Iraqi, Musa Raina and Kaji Chak, all staunch Shias, points to his being a follower of the same faith. What adds to this assumption is his strong dislike for Mirza Haider Doghlat, an alleged persecutor of the Shias. The author’s extolling of Sikandar as doing some kind of virtuous deed by his alleged persecution of Hindus reflects his own bias when each time he takes the name of the king as an iconoclast, he invokes God’s blessings (God bless his soul) for him. Simultaneously, he is unforgiving for Sikandar’s son and successor, Zainul Aabideen, for reviving “idolatry and heresy” which, he recalls, had been stamped out during the reign of Sikandar. “The customs and practices of the polytheists and the heretics received fresh impetus and were given renewed currency,” he writes about Zainul Aabideen whom Kashmiri Hindus remember as a benevolent king. “The community of infidels and heretics called him the Great King because they flourished under his rule and he was known by the name throughout his kingdom,” he adds.
9. The book was published by the *Lala Rukh Publications* of the State’s then Information & Broadcasting Department headed by Janki Nath Zutshi.
10. The book gives a detailed account of Hindu mythology on the emergence of the Valley of Kashmir out of mythical Satisar and credits its drainage to the folk hero Kashyapa but altogether ignores a parallel mythical account subscribed to by the Muslim majority community that the water of the lake was drained by Prophet Solomon who visited Kashmir during the reign of Narendra. Ratnagar, a historian prior to Kalhana, credits Sandiman or Solomon with draining the water of the huge lake that Kashmir was. Half of Kashmir had been inundated for a thousand years causing huge damages to life and crops. The hapless people on seeing the miracles of Solomon beseeched him to deliver them of this curse. Sandiman ordered his *jins* (Jinns or djinns or genies) to remove the blockade, which they did, and the submerged land became again available for agriculture (Shahpuria, *Kalhana’s Rajatarangini*, I: 107). Bernier has also alluded to this as an old legend among the people of Kashmir. The book ignores the scientific explanation given by geologists for the drainage of water and coming into existence of the Valley of Kashmir. Again, the book wrongly describes ascendancy of Zainul Aabideen to the throne as a consequence of the flight of Sinhadeo or Sahadeva in the wake of Tartar invasion which happened in 1319 AD, 100 years before Zainul Aabideen assumed power in 1420 AD after defeating his brother Ali Shah. Also, Chaks did not over-run Haider Shah, the son of Zainul Aabideen, as claimed by the book; he died after a brief rule of a year and few months.

Chapter One

Aborigines

The earliest story about Kashmir we know of is through the *Nilamata Purana*, an anonymous text in verse dealing with *tirthas*, rituals and ceremonies of Kashmir.¹ It is considered to be a treatise on the cultural history of Kashmir and provides a social background to the *Rajatarangini*'s dynastic and political history.² In the *Nilamata* tale, the land of Kashmir was occupied by a vast lake for six *Manvantaras*³ since the beginning of the *Kalpa*.⁴ The six *yojanas*⁵ long and three *yojanas* wide lake was called the Satisar. In the seventh *Manvantara*, on the plea of Kashyapa, the water of the lake was drained off through an outlet made with a plough by Ananta by the orders of Visnu who, along with other gods and goddesses, had come there to kill *Jalodbhava* (water-born), the demon who was invincible in the waters. On the death of *Jalodbhava*, the *Pisacas* and the descendants of *Manu* were settled there by Kashyapa to live in company of the *Nagas*, progeny of Kashyapa and his wife Kadru and the original inhabitants of the Valley.

The *Nagas* are believed to have been snake worshippers without any set religion or philosophy at the back of their spiritual life.⁶ The *Nilamata* is ambiguous in so far as their form is concerned. Sometimes they peep out as humans and at other times as snakes living in water. This human-reptile specie appears to have had supernatural powers, making it easy for them to change form. The identity of *Pisacas* also remains undecided even as modern folklore associates them with the ghosts of persons dying an unnatural death. Their mention in the ancient Indian literature and the promiscuous use of the term *Pisaca* has led many scholars to doubt their existence as a tribe.⁷ The *Naga* story has found way into the folk literature of Kashmir where we have a popular romantic folktale called *Hemaal Nagrai* in which a serpent hero *Nagrai* assumes human form and falls in love with

Heemaal, daughter of king Baldeva. Few place-names existent in south Kashmir, including a spring at Shopian, are even today sought to be linked with this folktale to establish the presence of the *Nagas* in prehistoric Kashmir.

The *Nilamata* was composed somewhere between the 6th and the 8th century AD. The lower and upper limits of the dates cannot go beyond this period as reasoned by Dr Ved Kumari Ghai thus:

Some alterations and additions were made in the text of the *Nilamata* after the 9th or the 10th century AD, in order to make it cope with the Monistic Shaiva Philosophy of Kasmira. Had the *Nilamata* been composed after the 9th or the 10th century AD, there would have been no scope for such changes. The lower limit of the date of the *Nilamata* may, therefore, be the 8th century AD. As regards the upper limit it may be about the 6th century AD, as Buddha began to be regarded as an incarnation of Visnu from about 550 AD.⁸

The *Nilamata* is a *mahatmya*, although Ghai insists on calling it a *Purana* because the text "has claimed this title for more than seven hundred years."⁹ One of its many names is *Kasmira Mahatmya*.¹⁰ It contains in its body many *mahatmyas* such as the *Kaptesvara Mahatmya*, the *Asramasvami Mahatmya* and the *Vitasta Mahatmya*. A *mahatmya* is a handbook for priests of a particular *tirtha* intended to support the claims put forth on behalf of the holiness of the *tirtha* and the spiritual rewards promised for a visit to it.¹¹ In the words of K. M. Panikkar, *mahatmya* is a form of literature glorifying sacred localities, collecting and *often inventing* [italics mine] legends about them, showing how they were the favoured of the deity to which they were attached.¹² He describes 'good many of them' as valueless, except as propaganda literature for places of pilgrimage.¹³ For its interest being 'too local',¹⁴ the *Nilamata* does not fall in the category of a *Purana*. A *Purana* deals with a wide range of topics, particularly myths, legends and other traditional lore. Several of these texts are named after major Hindu deities such as Vishnu and Shiva.

The *Naga* and *Pisaca* story was lifted verbatim by Kalhana. In fact, he added to his text a couple of *Naga* tales for embellishment and effect.¹⁵ Successive chroniclers and writers reproduced the story,

thereby sanctifying the existence of the two mythical tribes. Few traced the movement of ancient people and drew from comparative linguistic elements to 'establish' the existence and origin of *Nagas* and *Pisacas* in Kashmir. There are different premises about where they came from. For George Grierson, who vehemently denies Sanskrit the motherhood of the Kashmiri language, the *Nagas* and *Pisacas* were of Dardic stock and came from Dardistan. Some specifically trace their origin to Nagar, Hunza and other areas of Daradistan.¹⁶

So far as the earliest human presence in Kashmir is concerned, the previously held view that no stone tools of early man had been found in the proper Kashmir Valley no longer stands. It was observed that after prolonged investigation of the Ice Age in India and the associated human cultures, no such evidence had been found in Kashmir. The apparent absence of man in the Valley was attributed to the continued uplift of the outer Himalayas or the Pir Panjal range and the extreme cold during the second glacial period.¹⁷ In 1969, however, a team of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)¹⁸ conducted excavations at Pahalgam in south Kashmir which yielded a massive flake and a crude (Abbevillian) hand axe from well-stratified deposits dating to the Second Glacial and Second Interglacial periods, respectively.¹⁹ Plaster casts of these finds were exhibited at the UNESCO conference on *Homo sapiens* at Paris and were judged to be genuine tools by distinguished prehistorians.²⁰ Further work at Pahalgam by experts produced nine more tools from deposits attributable to the Second and Third Glacial periods.²¹ On the basis of these finds, it was assumed that "the massive flake industry [in Kashmir] would be the earliest in the Indian subcontinent, and probably the earliest in Asia."²²

For the purpose of fixing the stratigraphical horizon of the tools obtained from Pahalgam and to re-examine the Quaternary glacial sequence in that area, experts from Deccan College, Poona, and ASI, Nagpur, carried out a detailed survey of the Liddar Valley.²³ In their opinion, the Early Palaeolithic tools from Pahalgam seem to be of the Middle Pleistocene age.²⁴ These tools were found embedded in a boulder bed, which, according to geological definition, makes it rather difficult to know for sure whether the tools are *in situ* or represent a reworked location having been brought to their current location, like their host rocks, from some other location and deposited together with

the host boulders. In the latter case, they could definitely be older than the depositional age attributable to the boulder bed.

Irrespective of whether the tools were *in situ* or not, it is certain that they cannot be younger than the age of the boulder bed. There is no radiometric age data available on the boulder bed. However, a study aimed at determining the stratigraphic (depositional) age of the boulder bed conducted by scientists from Deccan Collège, Pune, and the ASI placed it in the Middle Pleistocene, which ranges from 0.78 to 0.13 million years before the present. Since the tools are reported to have been found at the base of the boulder bed, it is safe to assume their age no less than the lower age of the boulder bed, that is, 0.78 million years. In common parlance, it means that the man who used these stone implements lived in Kashmir at least 7.8 lakh years before the present.

Experts tell us that the prehistoric man was a wanderer and moved from one place to another in search of game which provided him sustenance. The prehistoric man of Kashmir too was a nomad and moved in and out of the Valley until the beginning of agricultural activity, when he decided to settle down. The earliest man in Kashmir lived at higher places such as Shopian, Gulmarg, Pahalgam or upper reaches along the Sindh river but by the mid-Pliocene period when the main lake or the mythological Satisar was drained, he came down to settle on the banks of the residuary lakes like Manasbal and started agricultural activities. With agricultural activities, settlements came about. The Burzahom and Gofkral sites have thrown up the thus far known first human settlements in Kashmir and these relate to 3000 BC–1000 BC or 5,000 years before the present.

Did *Nagas* and *Pisacas* actually exist or are these creation of some fertile mind? Legends like some folk hero draining water and making the land habitable for humans are not uncommon, and nobody knows which of these has the distinction of being the mother of all such fables. Nearer home, an analogous legend is told in China, according to which drainage of water made land habitable for humans and led to the emergence of the three-gorge river Yangtze:

In the demi-world where history intersects myth, it is said that the gorges were created by the ingenious folk hero, Yu, who, with the help of a troop of dragons, reconfigured China's hills and valleys to drain the land and make it habitable for humans.²⁵

An old Chinese saying subscribes to this belief thus: "But for Yu, we all should have been fishes."²⁶ Like in the case of a valley emerging from drainage of water, stories like *Hemaal Nagrai*, which some writers refer to in order to prove the presence of the *Nagas* in the Valley, are not exclusive to Kashmir. Kashmiri folklore is a rich piece of literature made richer by the additions of *Naga* stories that have their origin in *Jatakas*,²⁷ *Puranas* and the *Rajatarangini* of Kalhana.²⁸ It is very difficult to fix the origin of a folklore as the same tale with variables could be attested for many places. In central India, for instance, many Rajput tribes claim their right on the *Hemaal Nagrai* kind of tale where a *Naga* prince falls in love with a girl of their tribe.²⁹ Gulshan Majeed traces the origin of the *Hemaal Nagrai* folktale to Chota Nagpur,³⁰ where the rulers identified themselves as *Nag Bansi* Rajputs and progeny of a *Naga* king, who took human form, and a Brahman girl. To conceal his real identity, the serpent king had to keep his forked tongue in cheeks and his evil smelling breath away. The wife got suspicious, asked questions but failed to get an answer. The *Naga* took her on a pilgrimage where the woman developed labour pain. The real identity of her husband who turns into a Cobra was revealed to her, and she died after giving birth to twin male babies.³¹

Geologists have no argument with the claim that Kashmir was originally a lake formed with the rise of the Pir Panjal range. However, as against the *Nilamata* premise of a folk hero Kashyapa draining the lake water, they have scientific explanation to offer with regard to the emergence of the Valley and credit the drainage of water to tectonic changes. Geoscientist Dr M. I. Bhat, who specializes in the Himalayan geology, explains the emergence of the Valley thus:

As in case of the rest of the Himalayan mountain range, the Kashmir part of the range also emerged out of the Tethys Ocean following the collision of the Indian Plate with the Asian Plate about 50 million years ago. Due to continued collision, a large depression was developed at the beginning of the Pliocene epoch about four million years ago. The depression thus created, was soon filled with water as a result of drainage impoundment and the Kashmir intermontane depression assumed the status of a large inland lake. The lake attained greater depth when its western margin, the Pir Panjal Range, rose to its present height due to tectonic reactivation about 25,000 years ago. Concurrent

with this development, the Baramulla gorge opened and the entire lake water was drained, restoring the Valley to terrestrial conditions once again. The present day lakes like the Dal, the Anchar, the Manasbal and the Wular and swamps are the remnants of the erstwhile huge lake.³²

The story of Kashmir's origin and its people, as given in the *Nilamata Purana*, rests on the existence of the *Nagas*. If there are no *Nagas*, the edifice of the story tumbles. We are familiar with the *Naga* presence in Gandhara, the Gangetic Valley and Central and North Eastern India where shrines and inscriptions are attributed to them, and where they suffered onslaught, extermination and excommunication by the invading Aryans. But did they exist in Kashmir? Professor Gulshan Majeed attempts an answer:

While going through all evidence about Naga lore of India (south India has been purposefully left out of the discourse), which includes historical records augmented by inscriptions, representations in plastic, numismatics and other material finds, we find the domain of Nagas (till 6th century CE) confined to particular segments in the north west India, lower Indus region, Gandhara, Gangetic valley, central India and north east India. It is the region where they faced Aryans, lived in hostility or symbiotic relationship with them, exterminated or excommunicated at times, built political regimes, or kingdoms and entered into matrimonial relations with the desirous parties from other communities or groups. Nowhere in whole of this discussion Kashmir figures anywhere.³³

Significantly, the *Nilamata Purana* happens to be the only literary source to suggest the existence of the *Nagas* in ancient Kashmir. No *Purana*, *mahatmya* or any other brahminic writing, anterior to the *Nilamata Purana*, has surfaced to bestow Kashmir with *Naga* presence and cult³⁴ nor does any chronicler of the past points at this possibility. Remote historians such as Pliny,³⁵ Strabo³⁶ and Herodotus,³⁷ who mention Kashmir directly or indirectly in connection with an event, occurrence or a tribe, do not associate with it any kind of *Naga* cult.³⁸ Writer and scholar Professor Shafi Shauq holds the view that "the *Nagas* and the *Pisacas* are products of fantasy of the elite Brahmans as

are the *Asuras*, *Danavas*, *Malechas*, and the like.”³⁹ According to him, *Nilamata Purana* is an ancient folk tale that was given the form of a literary text in the 8th or 9th century AD: “It is a beautiful work of imagination, though there are intimations of old beliefs and rituals. The notion of lake origin is popular about many other regions. Then what is history about it?”⁴⁰

After observing speaking silence about the *Nagas* in the ancient historical literature on Kashmir, one would naturally look for any archaeological evidence in support of the *Nilamata Purana* premise. Does the soil of Kashmir produce any evidence to establish their existence? Dr Abdur Rashid Lone, who teaches ancient Indian history and archaeology at the University of Kashmir, has the following to offer as an answer:

Nagas do have a historical base in the main land of India. Certain temple shrines and sculptures there are ascribed to them. But as far as Kashmir Valley is concerned, except in the *Nilamata Purana* and the *Rajatarangini*, they do not exist. From the archaeological perspective, we do not have any concrete evidence of their presence in Kashmir. The sculptures ascribed to them in the central India are completely missing from the archaeological record in Kashmir. Neither the Burzahom rock art nor the tiles from Harwan suggest anything to support the presence of Nagas in Kashmir. Scholars have argued that certain Naga tribes existed in Kashmir but that is only a projection of the Brahmanical point of view propagated through the *Nilamata Purana* and the subsequent literature influenced by it.⁴¹

During the first half of the 20th century, an important development took place in Kashmir with respect to its past. Archaeologically, a very significant site, Burzahom Neolithic, in Srinagar district was discovered that unearthed facts about the earliest dweller of Kashmir. Burzahom is a comprehensive story of cultural sequence in Kashmir between 3000 BC and 1000 BC. In a short excavation in 1939, De Terra and Paterson collected some bone and stone tools from here. Subsequent exploration by the ASI brought to light about a dozen similar sites such as Begagund, Brah, Gofkral, Hariparigom, Jayadevi-udar, Olichibag, Pampur, Panzogom, Sombur, Thajiwor and Waztal, all located on

karewas, especially in the southeast parts of the Kashmir Valley. Extensive excavation conducted at Burzahom by the ASI from 1960 to 1971 brought to light a fourfold sequence of cultures: Periods I and II—Neolithic, Period III—Megalithic and Period IV—early Historical.⁴² The importance of Burzahom can be appreciated by the following UNESCO reference about the site:

The core aspects of the Burzahom Neolithic seem to have originated and organically evolved on the soil of Kashmir, and bear an exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition which has now largely disappeared. The nominated property with its entire cultural equipment range has potential for future excavation and other avenues of research which is surely ripe with new set of information throwing a welcome light on the formative stages of culture and civilization in this part of the world. Sometime at the turn of the fourth millennium BCE, the Neolithic Burzahom appears to the major centres of prehistoric man's activity in Kashmir. The detailed study of the material culture, palaeo-climate, flora, and fauna, micro-wear studies, and other multidisciplinary studies has provided an opportunity to understand and analyse the interaction of the Neolithic population of Burzahom with the Himalayan hinterland and the riverine sites of West Asia.... The entire site retains its physical integrity and is still set in a landscape that is reminiscent to the natural setting of the Neolithic men approximately in 4th millennium BC.⁴³

In the absence of archaeological evidence attesting to the presence of the *Nagas* or *Pisacas*, it is hard to take them as historical entities. "They were possibly not even humans,"⁴⁴ which prospect is hinted at by the *Nilamata* itself when it also mentions them as serpents living in water. Whatever their form, the soil of Kashmir has produced no evidence to confirm their existence. On the other hand, Burzahom and Gofkral give us ample idea about the earliest dwellers in Kashmir. The core aspects of the Burzahom Neolithic seem to have originated and organically evolved on the soil of Kashmir and bear an exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition which has now largely disappeared.⁴⁵ Importantly, no religious images or icons giving any idea about the religious beliefs of the dwellers have been found at these sites: "In

different places of the world, we find an image or an icon worshipped by people of that area at one point in time. In Burzahom we have found no such icon or image.”⁴⁶ However, what we know for sure from the findings there is that the Neolithic man in Kashmir buried his dead in carefully dug graves, in some cases alongside their domesticated animals. In the words of Aijaz Ahmad Bandey:

The burials of men, women and children seem to point to a high degree of respect for the dead as the graves, in which they were buried, were carefully dug and smoothened with a coat of plaster on the surrounding walls. The dead were so revered by the living members of a family that the graves were dug not away from their residences but under the floors of their living houses.⁴⁷

The Burzahom and Gofkral excavations did not throw up any evidence that could be linked with the presence of the *Nagas* in Kashmir. Human figures in a hunting scene engraved on a stone slab corresponding to 1700–800 BC do not carry any *Naga* motifs. Subsequent to Burzahom and Gofkral, the Semthan settlement, which is Kashmir’s journey from the megalithic period directly to historical period, too does not offer any information about the *Nagas*. The Semthan settlement near Bijbihara in south Kashmir “continues the tradition set by Burzahom and Gofkral; indications of pise and pebble walls and wheel turned red ware of fine paste, with slip treatment and the kind of pottery establishes their community life.”⁴⁸ The numismatic finds from the site show Kashmir’s connection with Indo-Greeks as does a standing Greek deity on a clay seal excavated from the site.⁴⁹ The terracotta figurine from the late Semthan (1st–2nd century AD) too bears no *Naga* resemblance. No such evidence has come forth from human or animal figures also on the Harwan tiles belonging to the 2nd–3rd century AD. “It cannot be the case that when [the] Nagas of India were being depicted with all their motifs and essential characteristics, Kashmir Nagas, who according to the Nilamata were so prominent and culturally overwhelming, were deliberately ignored by the executioners of art and crafts.”⁵⁰

Besides three major religions—Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam—that held sway on its inhabitants at different times, many cults and faiths that worshipped natural forces are believed to have been present

in Kashmir in its prehistoric period. However, we have no material evidence to substantiate this belief. The earliest religious images, both in clay and stone unearthed in Kashmir, belong to Buddhism and relate to the 3rd and 4th century AD. The earliest Hindu religious images are traced to the 5th or 6th century AD and bear marked influence of Buddhism. The Waghom Gajalakshmi image shows even the hand-held emblems, while the modelling and costumes remain the same. "Many of the Vijabror [Bijbihara] images look as the imitations of the Gandhara, with the exception that in certain cases the iconography was changed from that of classical Gandhara Buddhist images to the Brahminical one."⁵¹ Likewise, the 6th century sculpture of *Kartikeya* "compares closely with a Gandhara *bodhisattva* [italics mine] image of the 2nd/3rd century in terms of its massive frame with powerful shoulders and strictly frontal stance, bearing Greek stamp on the modelling."⁵² So far as Hinduism is considered, archaeological evidence is not clear. From the surface explorations at many sites, such as Baramulla, Bijbihara, Devsar, Awantipora and Martand, a large number of stone sculptures of different stone materials were recovered. These include a goddess, *Shiva lingam*, bull, etc., whose affiliation is generally accorded with *Saivism* and *Vaishnavism*. Art historians prescribe dates not earlier than 4th–5th century AD to this kind of art in Kashmir.

The period during which the *Nilamata Purana* was composed is very significant as it coincides with the annihilation of Buddhism in Kashmir. The Buddhist religious signs were demolished or converted into temples and the followers of the religion persecuted. The following excerpt from a book by Jialal Kilam about the history of the Kashmiri Pandits allows a peep into what the Buddhists in Kashmir had suffered:

During the reign of Nara I "thousands of monasteries were burnt, and thousands of villages that supported those monasteries were given over to the Brahmins." Brahmins having succeeded in establishing their supremacy set themselves in right earnest in strengthening themselves and their position. Many superstitious observances and practices were invented. Thought and culture were denied to everybody excepting themselves and the modern Hinduism in Kashmir began its growth.⁵³

Mihirakula, the 6th century AD monster king and patron of *Shaivism*, did everything to wipe out Buddhism from the face of Kashmir. The remnants of the religion were assimilated into *Shaivism* so much so that the founder of the religion, Gautama the Buddha, too was absorbed into the Hindu Pantheon as an incarnation of Visnu who, in popular Hindu belief, is considered as the preserver and upholder of *dharma*. The *Nilamata* prescribes celebration of his birthday.⁵⁴ It also lays down bathing of the Buddha image in water “rendered holy with all herbs, jewels and scents,” decoration of houses with paintings, celebration of a festival swarming with dancers, worshiping of Buddha with eatable offerings, flowers, clothes, etc., and giving charities to the poor for three days.⁵⁵

It is interesting to note that while many of the late *Puranas* and works such as those of Ksemendra, Jayaratha and Kalhana identify Buddha with Visnu, all of them denounce Buddhism indirectly by assigning Buddha the task of deluding the people.⁵⁶ The departure by the *Nilamata* in mentioning Buddha in a spirit of catholicity looks calculated. Buddhism in Kashmir, although under serious attack, still held sway on people when the *Nilamata* was composed. The *Shaivite* Brahmans were on the course of assimilating Buddhism and its followers into Brahmanism. In contrast to *Puranic* literature, they accorded a high pedestal to the Buddha in an effort to earn conversion of Buddhists to Hinduism. However, the fall of Kushans paved the way for exploits of the Brahmans who later even modified Buddhist statues to give them a Hindu appearance. The 5th century AD Buddhist statue of Baramulla symbolizes the modification to present it as a Shiva image. However, even after modifications “which are naive, Buddha is still discernable.”⁵⁷ The Brahmans who had Mihirakula’s patronage and were now holding power and influence propagated *Shaivism* and built a new religious narrative through the *Nilamata Purana*. The *Nilamata*, thus, marked an orbit round which the history and culture of Kashmir was constructed. The text became the argument and the evidence on the ‘Hindu origin’ of Kashmir and its people.

After assimilating its Buddhist population and their chief religious figure, it was turn of the geography of Kashmir to be moulded according to Hindu beliefs and ceremonies. Hence, water bodies, mountains,

and places and shrines were christened (or rechristened) by assigning to them names already in vogue or recommended by the Brahminic literature in India. Springs were assigned to serpent gods. Sheshnag, Anantnag, Vasukh Nag and Takshakh Nag were offered additional dwelling places in Kashmir over and above their original abodes in India.⁵⁸ Not surprisingly then, the *Nilamata Purana* and the *Brahma Purana*, one of the 18 major *Mahapuranas*⁵⁹ of Hindus in India, carry a large number of identical verses.⁶⁰ *Mabatmyas* were written as guides to the newly set up or the converted shrines and religious places, consecrating these to various Hindu gods and highlighting merits of their pilgrimage. Religious literature, including the *Nilamata Purana* and the *mabatmyas*, was written in Sanskrit language as against the language spoken by the local people. The Brahmins engaged in this task came from Vedic India where Sanskrit was the language of their scriptures. Their contempt for the language of the common Kashmiris was monumental as reflected by Kalhana's scorn for a 9th century ruler of Kashmir who did not speak Sanskrit.⁶¹ Kashmiri language, as old as Kashmiri people and a continuum without any specific beginning,⁶² was eventually evicted from the literary and intellectual sphere, thus completing the cultural aggression on Kashmir.

Mythology is a vital feature of every culture and plays an important role in the lives of its believers. Narratives of ancient civilizations, such as the Greek, the Roman, the Egyptian and the Indian, have their major content in mythology. However, it is weird to historically accord aborigine status to a tribe that exists only in mythology. Moreover, the concept of aborigines does not sync with a land like Kashmir which is geographically contiguous with many other lands such as Central Asia, China, Afghanistan and India. It goes well with a land mass circled by oceans like Australia.

Notes and References

1. Pannikar, Introduction to *The Nilamata Purana* by Ved Kumari Ghai, I: v.
2. Ibid., v-vi.
3. *Manvantara* is an astronomical period of time measurement. According to Hinduism, *Manvantara* is created and ruled by a specific *Manu* (the Hindu progenitor of humanity) who in turn is created by Brahma, the Creator himself. The

- specific *Manu* creates the world and all its species during that period of time. Each *Manvantara* lasts the lifetime of a *Manu*, upon whose death, Brahma creates another *Manu* to continue the cycle of Creation or *Shristi*.
4. Fourteen *Manus* and their respective *Manvantaras* constitute one *Kalpa*.
 5. *Yojana* is a measure of distance differently regarded as equal to four, five, nine or eighteen English miles (Ghai, *The Nilamata Purana*, I: 16).
 6. Aash, "Jammu Mai Nagmat," 315.
 7. Ghai, *The Nilamata Purana*, I: 58.
 8. Ibid., 14.
 9. Ibid., 1: 5.
 10. Ibid., 1.
 11. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, II: 380.
 12. Pannikar, Introduction to *The Nilamata Purana* by Ved Kumari Ghai, I: v.
 13. Ibid.
 14. Ibid.
 15. Majeed, *No Naga Presence in Ancient Kashmir*, 36.
 16. Hassnain, *Buddhist Heritage of Kashmir*.
 17. Sankalia, *New Evidence for Early Man in Kashmir*, 1971.
 18. The team comprised H. D. Sankalia, R. K. Pant and Sardari Lal.
 19. Sankalia, *New Evidence for Early Man in Kashmir*, 1971.
 20. These included Professor Francois Bordes, L. S. B. Leakey and H. L. Movius. The exhibition was held in September 1969.
 21. Ibid. (The team comprised R. V. Joshi, S. N. Rajaguru, Z. D. Ansari and H. D. Sankalia)
 22. Ibid.
 23. They included R. V. Joshi, S. N. Rajaguru, R. S. Pappu and B. P. Bopardikar. Pahalgam is part of the Liddar Valley.
 24. Quaternary Glaciation and Palaeolithic Sites in the Liddar Valley (Jammu and Kashmir), *World Archaeology*, 369–79.
 25. *National Geographic*, Washington, September 1997, 21.
 26. Ibid.
 27. The *Jataka* tales are a voluminous body of literature native to India concerning the previous births of Gautama Buddha. These are the stories that tell about the previous lives of the Buddha, in both human and animal forms. The future Buddha may appear in them as a king, an outcast, a god, an elephant—but, in whatever form, he exhibits some virtue that the tale thereby inculcates (Encyclopaedia Britannica: www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jataka_tales#cite_ref-1).
 28. Majeed, *No Naga Presence in Ancient Kashmir*, 48.
 29. Ibid., 39.
 30. Chota Nagpur was group of nine princely states in the British India which later formed parts of Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa in the Indian federation.
 31. Majeed, *No Naga Presence in Ancient Kashmir*, 39.
 32. In an interview with the author on 27 February 2016.

33. Majeed, *No Naga Presence in Ancient Kashmir*, 32–33.
34. Ibid., 33.
35. Pliny (23–79 AD), was ancient Roman nobleman, scientist and historian who authored *Naturalis Historia* or Pliny's *Natural History*.
36. Strabo, who lived between 64/63 BC and 24 AD, was a Greek geographer, philosopher and historian. His most notable work was *Geographica* or Geography, which presented a descriptive history of people and places from different regions of the world known to his era.
37. Herodotus, a contemporary of Socrates, was a Greek historian who lived in the 5th century BC (484–25 BC). He was widely referred to as The Father of History. He is known for his work *The Histories*.
38. Majeed, *No Naga Presence in Ancient Kashmir*, 33.
39. In an interview with the author on 1 March 2016.
40. Ibid.
41. In an interview with the author on 6 March 2016.
42. Archaeological Survey of India, “Excavations—Important—Jammu & Kashmir.”
43. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), *The Neolithic Settlement of Burzahom*, 2014.
44. Ajaz Ahmad Bandey, in an interview with the author on 22 February 2016. Formerly Professor at the Centre for Central Asian Studies, Bandey retired as Head of the Centre in 2015.
45. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), *The Neolithic Settlement of Burzahom*, 2014.
46. See note 44.
47. Bandey, *Prehistoric Kashmir*, 236–37.
48. Pande, “The Neolithic in Kashmir”; Agarwal, *Kashmir and its Monumental Glory*.
49. Majeed, *No Naga Presence in Ancient Kashmir*, 33.
50. Ibid., 33–34.
51. Bandey, “Silk Route Manifestations in Kashmir Art,” 156.
52. Ibid., 165–67. The sculpture from Bijbihara is now in Peshawar Museum, Pakistan.
53. Kilam, *A History of Kashmiri Pandits*, 7.
54. Ghai, *The Nilamata Purana*, I: 175.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid., 10.
57. Bandey, “Silk Route Manifestations in Kashmir Art,” 35.
58. Ibid., 38. In recent years, we have seen Kashmiri Pandit migrants setting up replicas of the *Khirb Bavani* Temple at Janipora in Jammu and *Hari Parbat* Temple at Faridabad in Haryana. “In Jammu and Delhi, one also finds replications of many important ashrams of saints and sages of the Valley.... Also, many temples have come up in Jammu which have been named after the original ones in Kashmir” (Koul, “Identity Politics of Kashmiri Pandits,” 269).
59. A *Mahapurana* is a genre of Hindu religious texts.

60. Ghai, *The Nilamata Purana*, I: 11.
61. Kalhana, *Rajatarangini*, book V, verse 206.
62. Shauq, *Kashmiri–English–Hindi Reader* (Introduction). The language is essentially different from all the Indo-Aryan languages, that is, Sanskrit, Upabhranshas and the Prakrits. It is also fundamentally different from Iranian languages. Its syntax, morphology and phonology are unique among all the languages of South Asia, but interestingly closer to the Slavic languages and the Germanic languages like English (*ibid.*).

Chapter Two

Mind's Eye

About 400–600 years after the *Nilamata Purana* was composed, Kashmir had the first known account of its political history, again a Sanskrit *kavya*, in the form of the *Rajatarangini*, literally meaning the river of kings. By his work, Kalhana earned for Kashmir a ‘unique distinction’ of having the longest recorded narrative in the Indian subcontinent. The text chronicles about four millennia of its past and is reckoned as a masterpiece with awesome literary excellence, flow and graphic details. This fact can as well be appreciated by translations of the work. The text has received eminence of an inevitable reference on Kashmir and for its author an enviable position and such fame that refuses to recede with the passage of time. The *Rajatarangini* is the basis on which rests the claim that Kashmir has a recorded history of 5,000 years.

Barring a few praiseworthy references that establish him as a master versifier, none of his contemporaries have written enough about Kalhana so as to let posterity know about this great versifier in some detail. Paradoxically, the person known to have brought to light 4,000 years of Kashmir’s ancient history has left behind no account of his own life. Whatever little we are acquainted with him is through conjecture drawn from his work. The only thing known for certain is the time when he compiled his work and that is straight from the horse’s mouth. From the preface of his narrative, we come to know that he started composing the *kavya* in 1148–49 AD and was done in a year.¹ From his work, he emerges as a male chauvinist who believes that “the course of women even of noble descent moves by nature downwards, like that of rivers.”² With no account about his personal life being available, the assumption is that he was the son of Champak, *dwaarpati* or the incharge of border areas of Harsha, the ruler of Kashmir between

1089 AD and 1101 AD. Kalhana waxes eloquent in praise of Champak and takes pains in explaining his absence during the last moments of King Harsha.³ He gives a graphic account of dialogue between the two, referring to an incident which could not have been known to anyone other than Champak himself.⁴ “The special account of this incident and the whole discourse becomes clear when we assume that Kalhana was [the] son of this minister.”⁵ He also refers to Champak’s brother, Kanak, at a couple of places, including his successful efforts to dissuade Harsha from destroying the largest idol of the Buddha at Parihaspura, which Kalhana refers to as Kanak’s birthplace.⁶ If the presumptions that Kalhana was the son of Champak and Kanak was latter’s brother are correct, then it can be assumed that the author of the *Rajatarangini* may have belonged to Parihaspura in Kashmir. Other aspects of his life that the *Rajatarangini* unveils are his being a master of Sanskrit language and a Shaivite Hindu in his religious beliefs.

The *Rajatarangini* first came to prominence through its translation three centuries after it was composed, when Zainul Aabideen, the 15th century ruler of Kashmir, was smitten by the narrative and ordered its Persian translation.⁷ Subsequent Persian histories of Kashmir also brought it into fame by drawing from it.⁸ However, the chronicle actually attained celebrity status only through its English renditions done in the 19th and early 20th centuries by M. A. Stein and Ranjit Pandit. Today, the narrative is read and quoted through these translations, especially Stein’s, rather than through the original Sanskrit text. The two English translations generated and contributed to the controversy that has since plagued the poetic tome. The translators have apportioned the *Rajatarangini* into two radically opposite categories of ‘Orientalist’ and ‘Nationalist’.⁹

Chitrakha Zutshi is of the opinion that for Stein, the “*Rajatarangini* was foremost a Kashmiri narrative that illustrated the peculiarity of Kashmir’s geographical position, which explains equally that remarkable individuality which characterizes the historical development of the country and constitutes its chief interest.”¹⁰ She argues that Pandit, on the other hand, performed “the double act of appropriating this history of a region into the nation’s collective literary heritage, thereby incorporating the region into the nation.”¹¹ Pandit’s translation had a specific purpose of using the

narrative to showcase Kashmir as part of India rather than a separate geographical entity. The *Rajatarangini* being composed in Sanskrit, a language with ‘pan-Indian pretensions,’¹² came handy for him. He was doing the translation for his Kashmiri father-in-law and leader of the Indian National Congress, Motilal Nehru, who regretted his inability to read the history of his old family homeland because of his unacquaintance with Sanskrit. The paratexts of Pandit’s translation “reflect a multiple ideological inheritance as they seek to present the narrative as a national [read Indian] literary text for the consumption of an incipient national audience.”¹³

From his work, Kalhana emerges as a strong believer in *Shaivism* and his description of events and personalities is fully loaded with his religious beliefs. The storyline done by him was faithfully followed by successive chroniclers. Kalhana is regarded as one of the outstanding icons of Kashmir. Ironically, however, he strongly despised the local language. He considered Sanskrit as *devabhasha* or divine language and had contempt for those who spoke in the native lingo. His description of the language of masses is a classical example of disrespect when he terms it as “vulgar speech fit for drunkards” and comes down heavily on a 9th century ruler of Kashmir, Samkaravarman, for speaking in this language. For this ‘sin’ he calls him a descendent of a family of spirit distillers.¹⁴ At the same time, however, he draws full inspiration from the cultural milieu he lived in and uses words, idioms, expressions, phrases and proverbs of the native language.

With the pre-eminent place the *Rajatarangini* enjoys among the chronicles on Kashmir, it has more or less attained reverence of a scripture so far as the ancient history of Kashmir is concerned. The veneration has literally made it an incontestable source for the history of Kashmir that has to be believed and not dispassionately examined. The lovers of *Rajatarangini* consider it to be a great work of historiography that encapsulates several thousand years of Kashmir’s past till Kalhana’s own time. Any detailed work spreading over such a long period would literally need years, if not decades, to complete. One could understand a piece of fiction as voluminous as the *Rajatarangini* being composed in a short period but chronicling in verse the political and social milieu representing about four millennia would require several years of continuous labour even from the best of the masters

of the language. It goes to the genius of Kalhana to have completed the 'epic work' in just one year. He started writing the narrative in the year 4224 Lukikasamvat,¹⁵ corresponding to 1148–49 AD, as is evident from a verse in Book I of the *Rajatarangini*, and completed it a year later in 4225 Lukikasamvat as Book VIII testifies.¹⁶ Even today, with online libraries and Google search engine available at the fingertips, far more time would be required to only sift through relevant material and sources to compose a work of this nature and volume. The *Rajatarangini*, it may be recalled, comprises eight *tarangas* containing as many as 7,826 odd verses.

The *Nilamata Purana* provided the cultural background to political and social history that Kalhana weaved with his mastery over words. He fully absorbed in his text the *Nilamata*'s mythological content and built on the foundation provided by it. The story of drainage of water and emergence of the Valley of Kashmir narrated in the *Rajatarangini* is the reproduction of the *Nilamata* account. In constructing political history also, he borrows from the *Nilamata* to begin his story with Gonanda who is mentioned as the first ruler of Kashmir. According to his own admission, he obtained the names of at least the first four kings from the *Nilamata Purana*. The admission is contained in verse 16 of Book I which reads: "Among the fifty-two rulers whom those [former scholars] do not mention, on account of the loss of traditions, four viz., Gonanda and [his successors,] have been taken [by me] from the *Nilamata* [Purana]."¹⁷ Incidentally, the *Nilamata* suffers from textual corruptions, a fact which has been recognized by many scholars. Aurel Stein, for one, has referred to it. So has Ved Kumari Ghai. In latter periods, the text has also suffered changes and additions. Stein observes, "The text is unfortunately in a very bad condition, owing to numerous lacunae and textual corruptions of all kinds.... It appears to me by no means improbable that the text has undergone changes and possibly additions at later periods."¹⁸

Before the *Rajatarangini*, there had been works of ancient date containing the royal chronicles of Kashmir.¹⁹ These include Suvrata's poem, Ksemendra's *Narpavali* and chronicles of Padmamihira and Chavillakar. From the *Rajatarangini*, we gather that Kalhana had consulted as many as 11 earlier works on religious and historical literature excluding the *Nilamata Purana*. None of these works, however,

have come down to us,²⁰ hence are not available ‘for comparison’.²¹ These works were Kalhana’s eyes to peep into the ancient Kashmir. However, he himself is not sure about their credibility on account of either being troublesome reading owing to the author’s misplaced learning²² or no longer existing in complete state²³ or having become fragmentary in consequence²⁴ or lack of dexterity in the exposition of the subject-matter²⁵ or no part being free of mistakes.²⁶ The shaming of these sources by Kalhana himself raises some questions: Wherefrom did he collect his information about 3,000 years of Kashmir’s past? Did he rely on the same ‘fragmentary, dexterity-lacking, troublesome reading, misplaced and full-of-mistakes’ sources or did he reconstruct prehistoric Kashmir purely with his poetic imagination? In either case, the authenticity of an overwhelming portion of his work is put to question.

Kalhana’s contemporaries such as Manakh and Alak Dat have described him not as a historian but as a poet *par excellence*. Manakh, in his poem *Srikanth Charit*, has portrayed him as occupying the place of prominence among the outstanding poets.²⁷ Alak equates him with the legendary poet, Bilhana, and finds his poem [read the *Rajatarangini*] mirroring the latter’s skill.²⁸ In the opening verses of the *Rajatarangini*, Kalhana himself gives us enough hint to assume that his poetic imagination has heavily worked in producing his epic work. He describes poets as *prajapatis* in creative power, able to bring forth lovely productions that can place the past times before the eyes of men.²⁹ He boastfully claims, “If the poet did not see in his mind’s eye the existences which he is able to reveal to all men, what other indication would there be of his possessing divine intuition?”³⁰ Here, Kalhana alludes to the ‘mind’s eye, creative power and divine intuition’ of a narrator that go into making of an important work like the *Rajatarangini*. He possessed “a keen, observant eye, considerable sense of humour, vivid poetic imagination and extensive knowledge of human nature,”³¹ which he put to use to record events preceding him by 3,000 years.

The *Rajatarangini* has shrouded the history of Kashmir in legend and mythology. As a master versifier, the author has interwoven these with happenings in such a manner that it is difficult to distinguish one from the other. The narrative, though of high literary value, is

thus hard to be fully regarded as a reliable source of history. Added to this are distortions that have crept into the text over the centuries as alluded to by several writers. According to Aurel Stein, up to the 7th century AD, Kalhana has adopted "a wholly artificial nature of the chronology," which "represents an attempt to fill a great chasm in historical tradition by figures bearing a fictitious look of exactness."³² Walter Lawrence, who has extensively quoted from the *Rajatarangini* in his work, *The Valley of Kashmir*, is ready to accept it as "a trustworthy record from the middle of the ninth century onwards" only.³³ Stein observes:

The contents of Kalhana's work from the point of view of the critical tests which we are able to apply to them, divide themselves into two great portions, marked also by a corresponding difference in their intrinsic historical value. The narrative of Books IV–VIII which extends from the beginning of the Karkota dynasty to Kalhana's own time, we are able to check in many important points by independent evidence from other sources, such as coins, inscriptions and the notices of Indian and foreign writers. Our position is very different in regard to the first three Books containing the narrative of the earlier epoch. The record here found of the successive Gonandiya dynasties, whose rule is supposed by Kalhana to have filled an aggregate period of nearly 3050 years, consists mainly of bare dynastic lists interspersed with more or less legendary traditions and anecdotes. The persons and events which figure in them, can but rarely be traced in our other sources, and then, too, only with considerable variations as to date and character.³⁴

In other words, out of the total 4,000 years of Kashmir's history that Kalhana reconstructs for us, the narration of 3,000 years is not corroborated by any other source. The reconstruction of this overwhelming period appears to be the result of his poetic imagination, for he was a great versifier of Sanskrit language. There is consensus among scholars on recounting of this period being imaginary. Jawaharlal Nehru, in his foreword to Ranjit Pandit's translation, appears in a dilemma over whether to describe Kalhana's work as history or poetry for its "vague and sometimes fanciful" early sections but "quickly warms up to the text as presenting evidence of Kashmir's ties to India."³⁵ Nehru's

warming up to the text despite expressing doubts on its authenticity, at least for its major portion, could be understood in the background of his politics which did not see Kashmir outside the boundaries of India. Lack of authenticity in the first three Books of the *Rajatarangini* can be illustrated by many examples. Stein finds the chronology of these three books to be “widely different position[s]”³⁶ as compared with the rest. He observes:

Here we are furnished nowhere with true dates but only with figures indicative of the supposed duration of the individual reigns. Kalhana cannot supply even these figures for the initial part of his dynastic list, comprising characteristically enough fifty-two ‘lost reigns’. Yet notwithstanding this acknowledged want of tradition we find Kalhana fixing the imaginary date of a legendary event previous to these ‘lost reigns’ as the starting point of his chronological calculations. The latter are vitiated not only by the unhistorical character of the initial date, but also by arbitrarily chosen aggregates for the duration of specific dynasties. For these aggregates Kalhana cannot adduce his authority, nor even claim the support of a uniform tradition of the assent of his predecessors.³⁷

The imagination of the storyteller in Kalhana touches fantastic heights when he narrates the expeditions of Meghavahana, the ruler of Kashmir, near the sea resting under palm trees and planning to invade Lanka [present Sri Lanka] to teach the ‘land of demons’ the ways of peace.³⁸ With the same poetic ease, one might say, he lets Jayapida triumphantly march into Nepal and credits him with successes there and in the East. Likewise, Ranaditya’s rule spreads over a period of 300 years³⁹ and Mihirakula’s rule is recorded 700 years ahead of his father, Toromana.⁴⁰ The 11th century philosopher, mathematician and historian, Alberuni, who learnt Sanskrit and seriously studied Hindu philosophy and culture before penning his masterly account of India, *Kitab-ul-Hind*, finds Hindu chroniclers generally not paying “much attention to the historical order of their kings, and when they are pressed for information and are at a loss, not knowing what to say, they invariably take to tale-telling.”⁴¹ This ‘tale-telling’ abounds in the *Rajatarangini*.

In the use of his ‘mind’s eye,’ Kalhana has lost sight of time and space and observed people living in two different epochs at one place at a given point in time. Thus, we see Sri Krishna, a Hindu god, quoting from the *Nilamata Purana* which was composed in the 6th–8th century AD. According to Kalhana, after the demise of Damodara I, Sri Krishna had the king’s pregnant widow, Yashovati, installed on the throne of Kashmir. When the adversaries grumbled at the coronation of a woman, he appeased them by reciting this verse from the *Nilamata Purana*: “Kasmir land is Parvati; know that its king is a portion of Shaiva. Though he be wicked, a wise man who desire [his own] prosperity, will not despise him.”⁴² Likewise, a lake in north Kashmir is described as the source of River Ganga⁴³ (The Ganges) that actually flows through the Indian Plains and has its source in Gangotri in the Himalayas. Or, look at his description of a *tirtha*, identified by Stein as located in Shupian, a south-Kashmir town in the lap of the Punjal Mountain, from where, Kalhana believed, “one at once reaches Sarada”⁴⁴ (or Sharda), a Hindu shrine in the (now) Pakistan Administered Kashmir. Such a long distance could only be covered ‘at once’ through poetic imagination.

The *Rajatarangini* intertwines mystery with the history of Kashmir by attributing super-natural powers to its characters. They appear to be supermen rather than normal mortals and even burn their adversaries into ashes by blowing out fire. When the lecherous king Nara, we are told, cast his evil eyes upon the wife of a *Naga* and tried to bodily lift her, the couple went to the Lord of the *Nagas* who rose blind with fury and cast

dense darkness by thundering clouds of sinister look, he burned the king with his town in a rain of fearful thunderbolts. The Vitasta (ritualistic name of the Jhelum) which carried the marrow, blood and fat flowing from the bodies of the burned men, looked as if adorned with the eyes of peacocks’ tails.⁴⁵

King Damodara II, a ruler of Kashmir at least a century before Christ, is turned into a snake by the wrath of a group of Brahmins whom he refused food before he had taken a bath. Unless he heard the whole of Ramayana in a single day the curse would not cease. “Even to this day people recognize him by the steam of his breath, which

the curse has made hot, as he rushes about in search of water far and wide on the *Damodara-Suda*,⁴⁶ writes Kalhana about 1,300 years after the supposed incident. Given the hard-to-believe stories in the *Rajatarangini*, Stein observes:

Miraculous stories and legends taken from traditional lore are related in a form showing that the Chronicler fully shared the *naïve* credulity from which they had sprung. Manifest impossibilities, exaggerations and superstitious beliefs, such as which we must expect to find mixed with historical reminiscences in popular tradition, are reproduced without a mark of doubt or critical misgiving.⁴⁷

A classical example of poetic exaggeration is Kalhana's account of the ancient capital city of Srinagari, identified by Stein and Cunningham as the present-day Pandrethan, built by Ashoka.⁴⁸ He paints a picture of the city outside the realms of reality: "That illustrious king built the town of Srinagari, which was most important on account of its ninety-six lakhs of houses resplendent with wealth."⁴⁹ Pandrethan, it may be recalled, is a locality 7 kilometres to the southeast of today's Srinagar city. It is a narrow and small strip of land sandwiched between mount Beswan and River Jhelum. The area is barely enough to accommodate a thousand odd houses.⁵⁰ The account of Kalhana that there were "ninety-six lakh houses resplendent with wealth" is a clear case of imagination running amuck. In the words of Akhtar Mohi-ud-Din:

It is incredible that this locality could hold a population of 3,84,00,000 (Thirty-eight million, four hundred thousand) souls, if we reckon that each house was occupied by just one couple and their two children. Even if we include comparatively vast areas from Badami Bagh on one side and Sempora and Pherstabal on the other, together with the villages, Khrew and Zewan, it would not be possible to create such a city as huge as mentioned by Kalhana.⁵¹

Despite having evolved enormously in terms of settlements and population since the times of Kalhana or, importantly, Ashoka, the total households in Srinagar city even today are about 239,570 with a population of 1,147,630.⁵² Pertinently, the present city is larger in

area by many orders of magnitude than what the ancient Srinagari of Ashoka had been.

The population of the ancient city is not the sole example of the spread of Kalhana's poetic embroidery. He has indulged in such over-statements quite often. The numbers he quotes to describe historical events are simply out of this world. Take, for instance, the figure of three crore women that he says Mihirakula slaughtered together with their husbands, brothers and sons. The story Kalhana weaves around this supposed incident is that Mihirakula was diverting the course of River Candrakulya when a rock in the middle, which could not be moved, impeded the work. The king performed a penance and was informed in the dream that a powerful *yaksa* who observed the vow of chastity lived in the rock and if a chaste woman was to touch it, the obstruction would be removed. The attempts of every woman of good birth failed, and ultimately a potter's wife achieved the feat. This infuriated the king, and in anger he "slaughtered three crore women of respectable birth, together with their husbands, brothers and sons."⁵³ Assuming that each killed woman had only one husband, one brother and one son, the number of slaughtered people comes to an unthinkable figure of 120 million.

Kalhana, as we observe, is quite liberal with figures. One is tempted to quote this instance as yet another representative of this peculiarity. It is about king Samkaravarman (883–902 AD) whose advance-guard of army he counts as "nine lakh foot-soldiers, three hundred elephants and a lakh of horsemen."⁵⁴ While we have no source to determine the actual population of Kashmir in the 9th century AD or any written or oral evidence to suggest a massive natural calamity claiming millions of people in between, the total population of the Valley as enumerated through "the first accurate census,"⁵⁵ conducted a millennium later in 1891 AD, was 814,241, far less than Samkaravarman's soldiers.

Mythology, apart from the versifier's imagination, has reduced a considerable portion of the *Rajatarangini* into fantasy tales or children's bed-time stories. As an able craftsman, he has weaved these fables into the larger text. His craftsmanship is at display from the story of the origin of Kashmir itself. Characters such as Sri Krishna, Vishnu, Brahma, Shiva and others from the Hindu epics frequently appear on the scene. We are told that Kashmir was a vast lake in whose

waters lived the *Nagas*, the serpent deities of the lake, who, from the depths of the lake, once heard cries of a newborn baby floating on a lotus leaf. They adopted the child and gave him the name *Jalodbhava* (water-born). When he grew up he started devouring people living on the periphery of the lake and soon the place became desolate. The serpent deities invoked gods who ultimately killed *Jalodbhava*, and one of them, Ananta, broke the mountain with his plough draining the water of the lake upon which 'Kasmira' came into being. King Jayendra's adviser, Samdhimati, was resurrected and ascended the throne after having been executed by the king for allegedly eyeing his throne. King Lalitaditya, when led into an ocean of sand by a deceitful minister of another ruler and faced with an unsure situation with his exhausted and thirsty soldiers, struck the sand with his lance and a stream gushed forth in the desert to quench his and his soldiers' thirst. King Meghavahana in his expedition of Lanka plunged into the foaming ocean and the waters parted, and he, smiling at his troops' astonishment, beckoned them to follow him. In this wondrous manner, Meghavahana reached Lanka and won over its king, Vibhishana.⁵⁶

A determined king plunging into an ocean or a brimming river and the waters parting to pave way for him seems to be Kalhana's favourite theme. Apart from Meghavahana, there is a curious incident he presents from the period of Lalitaditya which appears to have been taken straight from the life and times of a Prophet of Israel. We are told that Lalitaditya had collected a number of wise men around him. Of these, Cankuna once used a charm on the turbulent waters of a river of the Punjab, causing the waters to separate and leave a clear path in the middle for the army to cross.⁵⁷ "One wonders whether an echo of the story of Moses and the Red Sea had found its way to Kashmir."⁵⁸ The Bible and the Qur'an both adequately refer to this miracle taking place during the Prophethood of Moses.⁵⁹ Obviously, Kalhana funds his poetic imagination with religious literature, no matter where it came from. Many such fables taken out of the *Rajatarangini* have been published by the Children's Book Trust⁶⁰ for its natural readers—the children.

The journey of Kalhana's work from the time of its composition in the 12th century AD to our times is the journey of a masterpiece from a *kavya* to the most quoted source of Kashmir's 'history'.

This transition can be credited to such people in whose hands it fell after the versifier's death. They were "either less intelligent (and through their writing we know that they were so) or gullible, and they, ignoring its artistic excellence, began to call it 'the history of the kings of Kashmir'"⁶¹ rather than what Kalhana had named it as—*Rajatarangini* (The River of Kings). "This woeful process of misinterpreting a great creative work started (perhaps) with *Jonaraja* and was carried through the centuries to the present, when Dr Stein took upon himself the white man's burden of interpreting for us the writings of one of our own authors."⁶²

After the *Rajatarangini*, there existed no chronicle for over two hundred years until *Jonaraja*, the 14th century versifier, constructed a narrative to his own times. Non-existence of a parallel account for such a long interlude bestowed upon the *Rajatarangini* the status of an unrivalled source of history. Akhtar Mohiuddin observes:

In the absence of any positive evidence to the contrary, these Sanskrit works [*Nilamata Purana* and *Rajatarangini*] began to be taken as the source material for our history, if not the actual history, and thus an orbit was marked within which the researchers had to work in order to construct the history of Kashmir.⁶³

In composing the *Rajatarangini*, was Kalhana's aim actually to document the history of Kashmir from ancient times to his own, or was he only writing a long poem with a specific premise? This question cannot be summarily dismissed. Kalhana, as we know, composed a *kavya* with the theme that time is the all-conquering power, and that man is governed by destiny. Akhtar Mohiuddin has a question: If Kalhana wanted to write a *kavya* just to put forth his theme, why did he choose kings and queens, some of them real, as his characters, and why did he assert that he had consulted earlier documents for the authenticity of his narrative? Akhtar then answers it himself:

Any creative writer of whatever caliber knows that the choice of characters in a creative piece is always determined by the theme. In the present case, the theme that time was the all-conquering power would in no way be presented but through the kings, who were on the mundane plane, the only conquerors

during the feudal age and in whose hands lay this worldly destiny of multitudes and countries. And since Kalhana was a great writer, he knew how to achieve credibility and how to make the narrative realistic ‘by alluding to sources’, and by using the names of some of the real kings and queens.⁶⁴

As with the case of the *Nilamata Purana* and other Sanskrit works which suffered interpolation and distortion, the *Rajatarangini* too did not escape textual interference at the hands of those who attempted to either interpret it or use it as the basic source material. “We see, therefore, throughout the past centuries and particularly in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, almost all historians putting forth their views about the origin of the people of Kashmir within this narrow orbit.”⁶⁵ Scholars generally agree that Kalhana had as his source material oral and written evidence about his immediate preceding period. They are ready to vouch for the authenticity of his narrative only after 7th–8th century AD. No such undertaking is forthcoming from any quarter for the period preceding the 7th century AD, not the least for 3,000 years preceding his own time. Doubts about this period are created by Kalhana himself by alluding to the powers of his ‘mind’s eye’ and ‘divine intuition’ that he commissions to compose his work.

Notwithstanding this, the *Rajatarangini* has become the pivot of a narrative built and zealously guarded by people who subscribe to Kashmir’s mythological origin. Among other elements, the works of Jonaraja and Srivara helped in adding to this narrative and to the assertion that the advent of Islam in Kashmir saw forcible conversion and persecution of Hindus. The *Rajatarangini* turned into the bedrock of historiography in Kashmir. As goes the famous Persian couplet: *Khisht-i-aurwal chu nehad memaar kaj, Taa surayya mee rawad dewaar kaj* (If a mason puts the first brick at an angle, the wall, even if raised up to the Pleiad, is bound to come up oblique), the succeeding chroniclers, overawed by Kalhana’s mastery over the language, took his work as sacred word and on it built further Kashmir’s history. In the case of his immediate successors, the conflict between their scholarship and religious interests saw the fiction of Kalhana added up with impious bias, the worst victim of which was the 14th century ruler of Kashmir, Sikandar.

Notes and References

1. *Rajatarangini*, Book I, Verse 52; Book VIII, Verse 3404; Lokak 4224 is converted into 1148–49 AD by Thakur Achhar Singh Shahpuria, the Urdu translator of *Rajatarangini*.
2. Kalhana, *Rajatarangini*, Book VI, Verse 316.
3. Ibid., Book VII, Verse 1586.
4. Ibid., Book VII, Verse 1591.
5. Shahpuria, *Rajatarangini*, I: 8.
6. *Rajatarangini*, Book 7, Verse 1097.
7. The first Persian edition of the *Rajatarangini* was done by Zainul Aabideen's court historian, Mulla Ahmad.
8. These include the 17th, 18th and 19th century chronicles like *Baharistan-i-Shahi*, *Tarikh-i-Kashmir*, *Waqiat-i-Kashmir* and *Tarikh-i-Hassan*.
9. M. A. Stein's translation represents Orientalist categorization while Ranjit Pandit's translation represents Nationalist categorization.
10. Zutshi, "Translating the Past".
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Kalhana, *Rajatarangini*, Book V, Verse 206.
15. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book I, Verse 52.
16. Ibid., Book VIII, Vol. II, Verse 3404.
17. Ibid., Book I, Verse 16.
18. Ibid., II: 377.
19. Ibid., I: 24.
20. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 180.
21. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, I: 27.
22. Ibid., 24.
23. Ibid.
24. *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book I, Verse 11.
25. Ibid., Verse 12.
26. Ibid., Verse 13.
27. Shahpuria *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, 95. Professor Buhler has established that Manakh compiled this poem few years before Kalhana wrote his *Rajatarangini* (94).
28. Ibid., 96. Manakh identifies Alak Dat as a benefactor of Kalhana (Ibid.).
29. Kalhana, *Rajatarangini*, Book I, Verse 4.
30. Ibid., Verse 5.
31. Kak, *Ancient Monuments of Kashmir*, 12.
32. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, I: 31.
33. Lawrence, *Kashmir and Jammu*, 21.
34. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, I: 56.
35. Zutshi, "Translating the Past."

36. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, I, 69.
37. Ibid.
38. Rangachari, *Stories from Rajatarangini*, 42.
39. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book I, 31.
40. Keith, *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, 163.
41. Kalhana, *Rajatarangini*, Book I, 32.
42. Ibid., Book I, Verse 70–72.
43. Ibid., Verse 35.
44. Ibid., Verse 37.
45. Ibid., Verse 250–60.
46. Ibid., Verse 167.
47. Ibid., 28.
48. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book I, 19 fn.
49. Kalhana, *Rajatarangini*, Book I, Verse 104.
50. Mohi-ud Din, *A Fresh Approach to the History of Kashmir*, 43. It is not Kalhana only who exaggerates about the number of houses in a settlement. Munshi Muhammad Din Fauq, who 'discovered' the 35 kings missing from ancient histories of Kashmir including in the *Rajatarangini*, credits king Ramdev with "building the city of Babul over the Partan plateau" in north Kashmir, by constructing "eleven lakh houses". (Shahpuria, *Rajatarangini*, Book I, 30.)
51. Ibid.
52. As per the census of 2011.
53. Kalhana, *Rajatarangini*, Book I, Verse 322.
54. Ibid., Book V, Verse 143–44.
55. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 224.
56. Rangachari, *Stories from Rajatarangini*, 42.
57. *Rajatarangini*, Book IV, verse 248–51.
58. Thapar, *Historians of Medieval India*, 57.
59. Bible, stanza 14, verse 21, "Moses now stretched his hand out over the sea and Jehovah began making the sea go back by strong east wind all night long and converting the sea basin into the ground and the waters were being split apart. At length the sons of Israel went through the midst of the season dry land while the waters were a wall to them on their right hand and on their left"; Qur'an, chapter 2, verse 50, "And remember We divided the sea for you and saved you and drowned Pharaoh's people within your very sight."
60. Rangachari, *Stories from Rajatarangini*.
61. Mohi-ud Din, *A Fresh Approach to the History of Kashmir*, 4.
62. Ibid., 4–5.
63. Mohi-ud Din, *A Fresh Approach to the History of Kashmir*, 5–6.
64. Ibid., 5.
65. Ibid., 6.

Chapter Three

Malice

Sultan Sikandar (1389–1413 AD), the sixth ruler of the Shah Mir Dynasty, is accused of wanton destruction of temples and persecution of Hindu subjects. His image as a monstrous character out to destruct all noble structures representing Hindu deities has been handed down to us by a succession of chroniclers, beginning from a Sanskrit versifier of his own times. The amount of censure Sikandar has received at the hands of historians makes Aurangzeb, the 17th century Mughal ruler of India who was also persecuted by historians, look like a saint.

Sikandar ascended the throne at the age of 8 years. His mother, Haura, firmly dealt with opposition to the minor king and even put to death her own daughter and son-in-law to stem rebellion. His rule is distinguished by the strong momentum the spread of Islam received in Kashmir. He is the first and only Muslim ruler of Kashmir who introduced *Shariah* in governance. In his private life, he abstained from wine and other intoxicants and, on religious grounds, did not listen to music.¹

After attaining adulthood, the king engaged in many activities of state-building. He was successfully involved in military expeditions such as the invasion of North-West India and subduing of Ohind.² He tactfully dealt with the treachery of his minister, Rai Magre, who poisoned to death his brother, and exhibited great diplomatic skills in successfully averting the looming threat of the rampaging Timur's march into the country. He was an able, generous and brave ruler and looked after the welfare of his subjects. He put an end to many oppressive taxes³ and quelled revolts following which a period of peace ensued.⁴

Sikandar was liberal in patronizing learning that drew scholars from various parts of Asia. He established schools for the education of boys, and founded hospitals where medicine and food were supplied for free.⁵ He had a passion for buildings and constructed many

a mosque, hospice and madrasa. The Jama Masjid (Grand Mosque), the Khanqah-i-Mualla (Glorious Hospice) and hospices at Tral, Wachi and Mattan in south Kashmir are some of the buildings erected by him. He founded the town of Sikandarpur and built a magnificent palace there. He laid the foundation of *Idgah* at Srinagar. However, he is not known in history for these contributions. Instead, he has been written about as a heartless ruler indulging, day in and day out, in plunder of temples and oppression of his Hindu subjects.

Singling out Sikandar for alleged destruction of temples and excesses committed against Hindu subjects is an intellectual dishonesty that a series of our chroniclers have committed. Strangely, the worst iconoclasts that Kashmir has produced belonged to the Hindu community itself. Kings such as Jayapida (764–95 AD), Samkaravarman (883–902 AD), Abhimanyu II (958–72 AD), Harsha (1089–1101 AD) and Rajadeva (1213–36 AD) outrageously indulged in sacrilege of idols, temples and persecution of Brahmins. Jayapida caused 99 Brahmins seek death in water by drowning after confiscating their land at Tulamulla.⁶ Samkaravarman appalled his subjects by fiscal oppression and plundering of temples.⁷ He destroyed the town and temples of Parihaspura to build his town and temples of Samkarapura (now Pattan) in order to perpetuate his memory. Abhimanyu II set his capital on fire and destroyed all the noble buildings from the temple of Vardhana Swami to as far as Bhikshukiparaka.⁸ Rajadeva persecuted Brahmins to the extent that in order to escape persecution they would cry, “I am not a *Bhatta* (Kashmiri Brahman).”⁹

What about Harsha, the father of iconoclasts? Let us hear from Kalhana:

Then the greedy-minded [king] plundered from all temples the wonderful treasures which former kings had bestowed there. In order to get hold of statues of gods, too, when the treasures [of temples] had been carried off, he appointed Udayaraja ‘perfect for the overthrow of divine images.’ In order to defile the statutes of gods he had excrements and urine poured over their faces by naked mendicants whose noses, feet and hands had rotted away. Divine images made of gold, silver and other [materials] rolled about even on the roads, which were covered with night soil, as [if they were] logs of wood. Crippled naked

mendicants and the like covered the images of the gods, which were dragged along by ropes round their ankles, with spitting instead of flowers. There was not even one temple in a village, town or in the City which was not despoiled of its image by that *Turuska*, King Harsa.¹⁰

A couple of hundred verses down the line, Kalhana describes the breaking of the image of Visnu by Harsha at Parihaspura thus:

The king broke up and removed the glorious [image of Visnu] Parihasakesava which [Uccala], though quite destitute of means in the midst of that [famine], had preserved when he had it in his power.¹¹

The successors of Kalhana who took his work forward spared all these kings for the worst kind of iconoclasm and persecution but singled out Sikandar on the basis of ‘testimony’ of a contemporary versifier who, as we shall see ahead in this book, could have other reasons to malign the King than the one he nailed him for. “Jonaraja’s account of the worst excesses of the most zealous Muslim ruler was merely an echo of Kalhana’s description of Harsha, ‘a demon descended to destroy this land hallowed by gods, tirthas and rishis’.”¹²

Did Sikandar really deserve the label of an iconoclast and oppressor of Hindus?

Before deliberating on this subject let us go back into history and look at the period and the state of affairs of Kashmir prior to the time Sikandar ascended the throne.

Ahead of passing from a falling Hindu rule to a rising Muslim reign in the 14th century, Kashmir was torn by social disorder, crumbling governance and low morals of people. The elite, both in administration and religious affairs, were fattening on the flesh of the masses crushed under an unjust social order. Both Kalhana and Ksemendra point out extreme depravity prevalent among *Shiva* gurus (in Chapter 4). The difference between vice and virtue was blurred. Jayalal Kaul narrates the prevailing widespread lawlessness thus:

Kings rose and fell in quick succession; the court was continually rocked by intrigue and assassinations and the country by internecine feuds; the feudal lords the Damaras

and Lavanyas, addicted to arson and pillage, rose in revolt at the least provocation; there were numerous instances of kings and queens morbidly sensuous, cruel and oppressive; the Kayastha bureaucracy, corrupt and influential, opposed strong measures to suppress maladministration; even the Brahmins undertook *prayopavesana* (hunger strike) against several kings for their selfish caste interests; and some Hindu kings 'more wicked than sin', pillaged and plundered the temples and *mathas* (monasteries), and set fire to them, seizing and melting the gold and silver images of gods and goddesses. As a result of this people suffered greatly from the resultant anarchical conditions, heavy burden of taxation, rapacity of the feudal landlords and continual raids into the Valley by chieftains of the surrounding areas.¹³

The transformation of Kashmir from a Hindu kingdom to a mass Muslim society was not a sudden development but "a long drawn out process spreading over at least three hundred years during which momentous political, religious and cultural developments took place, marking off its different phases from one another."¹⁴ The development was made into a controversy by the Brahman chroniclers beginning with Jonaraja. They accused Muslim kings, primarily Sikandar, of persecution and forcible mass conversion of their Hindu subjects and putting to death those who refused to change their faith. The originator had his own reasons to make this allegation, as we will examine further. The accusation was taken up and magnified by successive Brahman chroniclers by propagating what was heard rather than observed in contemporary sources. These Brahman chroniclers ignored absolute and obvious facts and circulated the community legend of forcible conversion. Among them, Anand Koul, writing at the close of the first quarter of the 20th century, paints a dramatic picture of the plight of the 'sons of Avantivarma and Lalitaditya and the progeny of the blessed Rishis':¹⁵

It was neck or nothing with them in order to save their own religion. Hundreds were put to sword, thousands were flung into the rivers and lakes or killed in their homes. With indomitable courage, both physical and moral, they faced death at the hands of the 'Deputies of God'.

These ‘historians and non-historians’, coming as they did from a traditionally literate community, were the first to disseminate their community’s point of view and seed it in the writings of the 19th–20th century European authors and travellers writing on Kashmir. In demonizing the Muslim rulers, their creative abilities invented new atrocities on Kashmiri Hindus that the contemporary Brahman scribes had not observed. Intelligently enough, they put under wraps developments that would blow up their hypothesis. Accordingly, they do not let us have a view of the Muslim rulers loosening their belts to coexist with certain un-Islamic practices or not imposing taxes such as *jazya* and cremation tax. They do not tell us also about the Muslim rulers extending official patronage to the development of Sanskrit¹⁶ and Sultan Shihab-ud-Din refusing to melt the metal images of Hindu gods for converting them into coins when his Hindu minister, Udayashri, advised him this to overcome financial difficulties.¹⁷ The king whom the *Baharistan-i-Shahi* accuses of idol breaking, in fact, installed 18 lined stone inscriptions in Sharda script containing his invocation to Hindu god, Ganesha, besides constructing *dharma-matha* and repairing dilapidated temples of antiquity.¹⁸ They even ignored the inconsistency in Jonaraja’s narrative about Sikandar’s role as an iconoclast. At one time, the versifier accuses the king of wanton destruction of temples and at other time, it is his neo-convert Prime Minister Suhabhatta (who took the Muslim name of Malik Saif-ud-Din) whom he squarely holds responsible for the crime.

Jonaraja gives us an idea about the characters, identified by him as ‘leaders of the army’, allegedly involved in the destruction of temples and persecution of Hindus.¹⁹ They were the heads of the dominant and powerful landlord tribes whom Kalhana had identified by the general term Damaras²⁰ and who, like Suhabhatta, did not belong to the Brahman caste.²¹ The political chaos created by them was responsible for quick enthronement and dethronement of rulers from the 8th century AD onwards.²² No ruler could govern without the support of the Damaras whom the Brahmins derogatorily called *dasyu* or robbers. Historically, the Brahmins and the Damaras were always at loggerheads, exercising, as both were, huge power and influence to pressurize the ruler to subordinate the state to their personal interests. The clash of their interests caused perpetual animosity between the two

with each busy in seeing the other down. Their mutual antagonism travelled through the Hindu period to the Muslim period when the Damaras and the Brahmans found themselves in opposite religious camps. Suhabhatta as a neo-Muslim Prime Minister of Sikandar is believed to have avenged the animosity the Brahmans had towards the Damaras and, according to Jonaraja, instigated the King to destroy the images of gods.²³ The persecution of Hindus that Suhabhatta, and through him Sikandar, is accused of, has political rivalry behind it rather than any religious bigotry.

There is no mention in Jonaraja's work about the Kashmiri Hindus given the option of 'death, conversion or exile' or only 'eleven families of Brahmans' surviving the alleged persecution and forced conversion. Yet, a 20th century Brahman writer invents this charge as a historical occurrence.²⁴ According to Professor Wani, these myths were woven to alter the history to meet the community demands.²⁵ Jonaraja contradicts his own premise on forced conversion by alluding to the Brahmans agreeing to pay *jazya* instead of embracing Islam and many Brahmans and other castes embracing Islam for obtaining favour of the King.²⁶

The spread of Islam in Kashmir was neither a sudden nor a quick development. It took about three centuries to turn into a Muslim majority land. The presence of Muslims in the Valley goes back to the 8th century AD.²⁷ We come across references to Muslims being in Kashmir during the period of Lalitaditya (725–53 AD), and we know of Muslim army commanders employed by Harsha (1089–1101 AD).²⁸ Jia Lal Kilam writes about Harsha reorganizing his army under the Muslim commanders and how it helped him. In his words:

Harsha enlisted Muslims and organised the army on a new model. Each group of hundred soldiers was placed under the charge of a Muslim commander thus making it impossible for his soldiers to hatch plots or run away from the battlefield. From Harsha's time onwards, the Muslims as a class appeared in the political field. For long did they keep themselves allied with the rulers of the country and helped them in maintaining themselves on their tottering thrones. Their fighting qualities and the royal patronage made the Muslims a powerful factor in the body-politic. But it took them another two centuries before they became the masters of the country.²⁹

Bikhshachara (1111–1228 AD) organized a cavalry force manned mainly by the Muslims.³⁰ About 300 years before the Sultanate, we find Muslims occupying high positions in the army.³¹ "Significantly enough, both the non-local and local sources allude to the pouring of Muslims into Kashmir from the eighth century itself."³² An Arab commander in the service of Raja Dahir (d 710) sought refuge in Kashmir in the 8th century where he was warmly received by Chandrapida, the ruler, and granted a town.³³ Kalhana writes about king Vajraditya (763–70 AD) who "sold many men to the *mlecchas* and introduced in the country practices which befitted *mlecchas*."³⁴ These *mlecchas* were the Muslim adventurers, fortune seekers and traders from Sind and Multan where they had been ruling for more than half a century. By Kalhana's account, Islamic practices were in vogue in Kashmir as early as in the 8th century AD. Mansur al-Hallaj came to Kashmir in 895 AD, stayed here for about a year and engaged in religious debates.³⁵ As early as the 11th century AD, there were many Muslim soldiers employed in the army of Hindu rulers of Kashmir. Professor Mohammad Ashraf Wani presents the scenario thus:

The employment of 'hundreds of Muslim captains' in the armies of the Kashmiri kings at the turn of the eleventh century alludes to the presence of a sizeable Muslim population in Kashmir more than two hundred years before the establishment of the Muslim Sultanate. It is quite natural to presume that these Muslim captains would have either brought their families along with them or married local girls, both pointing to the presence of a larger Muslim population in Kashmir than is adumbrated in Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*. As these Muslims belonged to a different religion and culture, it is tempting to infer that these settlers would have brought with them different professionals to cater to their daily needs.³⁶

Instances of Muslim immigrants bringing their families and relations with them or of matrimonial relations between Hindu and Muslim nobles during the period are attested by Jonaraja.³⁷ Likewise, the 11th century narrator Ksemendra mentions the presence of Muslim singers³⁸ (*manqib khawans* and *fadayil khawans* singing praises of Allah) in Kashmir, while Kalhana reports the Lavanya nobles of

Kashmir fleeing to escape Harsha's oppression and eating "cow's meat in the lands of the *mlecchas*".³⁹ Kalhana presents testimony of the "profound Islamic influence"⁴⁰ of this contact when he feels constrained to use Sanskritized Persian terms in his narrative that he composed in his favourite *devabhasha*.⁴¹ The 13th century Italian merchant traveller Marco Polo informs us about the presence of a section of Muslims who worked as butchers for Hindus of Kashmir and lived among them.⁴² This section of population was either immigrant Muslims or among the first local converts. These developments confirm the close contact existing between local Hindu population and Muslims within and outside Kashmir. By the time the Muslim Sultanate was established, trickling of Muslims into Kashmir had continued. Among the arrivals was Shamsuddin Shah Mir, later a minister in the court of Kota Rani, who eventually established the Muslim Sultanate in 1339. Professor Wani is of the view that since the Hindu rulers greatly depended on their Muslim commanders and the neighbouring Muslim rulers, Islam did not encounter a hostile political climate in Kashmir.⁴³

The favourable political climate attracted prominent Muslim preachers such as Syed Sharfuddin or Bulbul Shah, Syed Hussain Simnani, Syed Tajuddin, Mir Saiyid Ali Hamdani and his son Mir Muhammad Hamdani from Central Asian cities, apart from hundreds of their disciples who introduced local population to the teachings of Islam and earned their conversion. Among the first converts was the Buddhist ruler of Kashmir, Rinchana, who embraced Islam at the hands of Bulbul Shah after having thorough discussions with religious divines of different faiths.⁴⁴ The conversion of the ruler had a positive effect on the spread of Islam. Kalhana's *mlecchas* had now graduated to the status of rulers. Jonaraja pulls out a fabrication that Rinchana was refused entry into Hinduism as he was found unworthy of initiation into the religion for being a Buddhist,⁴⁵ as if persecuted Buddhist masses were not forcibly converted to Hinduism during and after the 6th century, à la Mihirakula. The process of conversion of Kashmiri Hindus to Islam had begun three centuries before the establishment of the Muslim Sultanate climaxed by the end of the 15th century or early 16th century when "the writ of Islam ran large in Kashmir".⁴⁶

The conversion of Rinchana, who assumed the Muslim name of Sadruddin, did not establish Muslim rule in Kashmir. In fact, after

his death in 1323 AD, Kashmir reverted to Hindu rule for the next 26 years when ultimately Shamsuddin Shah Mir deposed Kota Rani and declared himself the king. Although Shah Mir's ascendancy to the throne marked the beginning of the Muslim Sultanate in Kashmir, yet Islam was still nowhere near being the guiding force for governance. In fact, un-Islamic traditions still ruled supreme as late as up to the period of Qutubuddin (1373–89 AD), the fifth ruler of the Shah Mir Dynasty. Islamic spirit in the life of the ruler and in governance was far from being visible. Qutubuddin had simultaneously taken two sisters in marriage,⁴⁷ an out-and-out unlawful and abhorred act in Islam. He would also daily visit a temple in the morning.⁴⁸ The most significant event that happened during his reign was the arrival of Mir Saiyid Ali Hamdani, reverentially called *Amir-e-Kabir* and *Shah-i-Hamdan* by Kashmiris. He transformed the country's social and religious landscape through his preaching, resulting in people embracing Islam in large numbers. It was he who pointed out to the King the immorality in being simultaneously wedded to two sisters upon which he divorced both and remarried one of them.⁴⁹ Qutubuddin was succeeded by his son, Sikandar.

By the time Sikandar ascended the throne, Mir Saiyid Ali had gone back and Mir Muhammad Hamdani had arrived in Kashmir to consolidate his father's mission. During Sikandar's reign, a Sanskrit versifier, Jonaraja, happened to be a witness to the happenings in Kashmir. He was later commissioned by Sikandar's son, King Zainul Aabideen, to record the history of Kashmir from where Kalhana had left it. Thus, he became the first scribe to have recorded the rule of Sikandar. Jonaraja was a contemporary of Sikandar, Ali Shah and Zainul Aabideen, the three Muslim rulers of the 14th and 15th century Kashmir. His pupil, Srivara, waxes eloquent in praise of his teacher and places him at the highest pedestal. Through him, we come to know that Jonaraja was the leader of the circle of Brahmanas with countless merits, who had mastered the sense of the Vedas and the codes of law, who was engaged in the performance of daily ablutions and prayers and when in the royal court, looked like Brihaspati.⁵⁰ Jonaraja was a staunch Brahman who considered his caste as "props of the universe."⁵¹ He appeared to have been very proud of his scholarship which is amply manifested by his being always "accompanied by a large body of followers."⁵²

A proud Brahman as Jonaraja was, he was obviously not at ease with the developments that shook the belief system which he invested in and a new faith rapidly taking root. A large section of Hindu society had renounced its religion and converted to Islam, thereby disassociating itself from what Jonaraja pompously represented. His annoyance at a far-reaching development that unseated his religion both from the hearts of his own brethren and governance could be well imagined. However, he does not seem to be so annoyed with Sikandar's immediate predecessors such as Qutubuddin, Shahabuddin, Alauddin, Jamshed or Shamsuddin as he appears to be with him. It is important to bear in mind that during their time although the political power was transferred from Hindu rulers to the Muslim Sultanate, Islam as religion, as noted earlier, was still far from being an influence, let alone, guiding force for governance. So long as this was the case, Jonaraja seemed to have no qualms with these Muslim rulers. The ascendancy of Sikandar, however, changed this scenario.

Sikandar's association with Mir Muhammad Hamdani influenced him to introduce Islam, in its puritan form, into the lives of his Muslim subjects and matters of governance. He banned all anti-Islamic activities such as drinking, music, gambling and dancing of women and administered the country according to the *Shariah*.⁵³ He was just, honest and an able ruler who ruled firmly unlike most of his predecessors. The new situation had put a staunch Brahman, Jonaraja, at odds with it all and the ruler who brought it about. He appears filled with anger and contempt at a level where he curses Sikandar like a typical wailing widow and writes about his death as having gone "to hell on account of the curse of a Brahmana."⁵⁴

Jonaraja had already failed the test of being an unbiased historian when he completely ignored to mention Mir Saiyid Ali Hamdani's arrival or his colossal work in Kashmir. With equal brazenness, one might say, he does not mention the construction of the Jama Masjid, a far reaching cultural and religious development taking place in the heart of Kashmir during his own time. The construction of the Grand Mosque was started by Sikandar against whom he nurses a grudge but was completed by Zainul Aabideen whom he deifies and calls Narayana incarnate, like other Sanskrit writers of the time who

raised him to the status of god in return of encouragement by the King.⁵⁵ Jonaraja records with adulation other constructions such as bridges, Zaina Laank and palaces constructed by Zainul Aabideen, but intentionally avoids a mention of Mir Saiyid Ali Hamdani and the Jama Masjid. Additionally, he seems to ignore anybody or anything related to Islam. We do not find any mention in his narrative of prominent Muslim saints, nobles or army commanders even during the time of his adored Zainul Aabideen. The most revered saint of Kashmir till this day, Sheikh Nooruddin, who lived in his time, too is ignored. So is his senior contemporary, Lal Ded. The two legendary figures have ruled the cultural milieu of Kashmir, and such profound influences are impossible to miss a mention in any contemporary narration unless wilfully done. Similarly, one of the most sacred Muslim shrines of Kashmir, the Khanqah-i-Mualla, constructed by Sikandar, too does not merit a mention by Jonaraja. We have already observed that while he himself lived through the reign of three Muslim rulers, he does not mention the word Muslim in his narrative unlike his contemporary, Lal Ded, in her verse. The prejudice against Islam becomes more emphatic when Jonaraja talks about the arrival of *saiyyads* (Muslim preachers) under Mir Muhammad Hamdani and Sheikh Jalaluddin Bukhari in an extremely contemptuous expression as “locusts in a paddy field.”⁵⁶ He is not even ready to believe that a Muslim ruler can do any good to his subjects when he writes about Shah Mir, “Strange that this believer in Alla [Allah] became the saviour of the people.”⁵⁷ Or look at his scorn for Islam when he describes conversion of local population as “polluting the caste of the people.”⁵⁸ At the personal level, Jonaraja’s dislike for Sikandar could also be explained by the fact that much as the chronicler considered himself as a great scholar or his disciples revered him as a Brahman of “countless merits,”⁵⁹ he could not invoke his patronage. A person of his ego must have felt hurt by the king’s indifference which, among other things, may have weighed heavily on his assessment of Sikandar. In contrast, Zainul Aabideen not only made him the court scribe but also patronized him. Jonaraja more than pays him back in his eulogy as the ruler of Kashmir in whom he saw no wrong and whom he adored as a Narayana incarnate.

Sikandar became an object of hatred and bias of the chroniclers for reasons other than genuine. He was accused of widespread destruction of temples and persecution of Hindus. His detractors saw him standing behind every ruined temple. In fact, Jonaraja describes him as breaking temples "day and night,"⁶⁰ as if he would attend to no other business of the state. The allegation of iconoclasm against Sikandar, started by Jonaraja, touched such absurd levels that he was condemned for destroying temples which are historically established to have been plundered before he was even born. A typical case is the temple of Parihaspura where a copper plate with Sanskrit inscription was allegedly discovered which 'predicts' the destruction of this temple "after the lapse of eleven hundred years by one Sikandar."⁶¹ Clearly, the author of the prophecy had no regard for historiography. Parihaspura was founded about 650 years before Sikandar was born and plundered about 500 years before the alleged iconoclast lived, by Samkaravarman who "had whatever was of value at *Parihasapura*, carried off in order to raise the fame of his own city."⁶²

The amusing aspect of prophesying temple destruction by Sikandar does not stop with Parihaspura, a town in north Kashmir. It travelled as far as Bijbihara in south Kashmir. Stein notes:

Exactly the same tradition is now current among the Purohitas of Vijabror about the destruction of the *Vijayesvara* image. This alleged inscription is said to have run as: *Ekadasa asatam varsam Sikendara amahala bismilla iti mantrena nasyante Vijayesvarah.*

The curious Sanskrit of this doggerel is an indication that its author may probably have belonged himself to the noble guild of Bachbattas.⁶³

The invented 'prophecies' about Sikandar destroying temples do not end there. There is this later day story about a wicked Brahman living in Mattan, a village in south Kashmir, who had illicit relations with his sister-in-law and wanted to atone his sin. He went to a guru who told him that the only atonement he could make for his enormous crime was to offer himself as a burnt offering to god. The Brahman accepted the advice, ordered a pile of wood to be prepared and was burnt. Before consigning him to flames he was asked about his last wish, as was the belief of the people that whatever a person who

gives himself to burn on a pyre wishes is fulfilled by divine power. The Brahman answered, "I want you to give me some milk and some flesh." When the guru heard his reply, he became exceedingly sorrowful, and said to the people who crowded around the burning man: "O people, this man will become a Muhammedan king, who will destroy all our idols and cast all our shrines down to the ground." The prophecy, thus goes the story, was fulfilled and Sikandar "[was born who] destroyed all the Hindu temples and broke their idols into pieces; and when there remained not another temple for this monster to destroy, he determined to go to Amarnath and break up the sacred emblem of Shiva, which is there in a cave."⁶⁴ Interestingly, the story presents the 'worst iconoclast' as previously a Brahman of Mattan, a revered place for Kashmiri Pandits even today for the 8th century AD Sun Temple located there!

The Persian chroniclers succeeding Jonaraja appear to admire Sikandar's 'iconoclasm' with some sort of religious enthusiasm. It looks like a race among them to pin him down. While the Brahman historians and writers emulated Jonaraja and, in fact, generated more 'evidence' against Sikandar, some Muslim chroniclers like Saiyid Ali bin Saiyid Mohammad either unwittingly fell into this pothole of disinformation or in the misplaced belief eulogized the King for having done a great religious duty. It appears that "they have resorted to such descriptions for religious and communal considerations; to earn religious merit on the one hand, and to propagandize iconoclastic trend on the other."⁶⁵ The anonymous author of the *Baharistan-i-Shahi* extols Sikandar and Saif-ud-Din for, what he describes as, 'eradication of infidelity and other aberrant practices'. The following excerpt from the Persian text is illustrative of this admiration:

Sultan Sikandar and Malik Saif-ud-Din, God bless them both, joined hands to gear their full effort towards the eradication of infidelity and other aberrant practices. They raised the banner of Islam and the standard of the faith of the chosen among people to the highest pinnacle of glory and exaltation. Through the blessings and support of Islam and by the propagation of the commands of the *Shariah*, they were rewarded with victories wherever they led their armies, confirming the saying that 'God helps those who help Muhammad's religion'.⁶⁶

The portrayal of Sikandar as a vicious iconoclast created a perception which sees no extant or non-extant temple, standing or dilapidated, in Kashmir whose demolition or desecration is not placed at his door. He is also accused of destroying temples where historically none existed. The case in point is the Kali Shri Mandir supposed to have existed at the site where the Khanqah-i-Mualla stands today. Significantly, none of the important Hindu chroniclers, whether preceding, contemporary or subsequent to Sikandar, including Kalhana, Jonaraja, Srivara, Prajaya Bhatt and Shuk Bhatt, have made any reference to the existence of any temple by this name at its supposed location or to its destruction by Sikandar.⁶⁷ Jonaraja who did not miss any opportunity to demonize Sikandar would not have spared him for such desecration. Yet the unfortunate King suffers the accusation even centuries after his death. Foreign authors who came to Kashmir during and after the 19th century too did not remain untouched by this historical fallacy. It shall have to be borne in mind that their link with the written and unwritten history of Kashmir was those native interpreters who had inherited hatred for Sikandar for allegedly converting a Hindu Kashmir into a Muslim Kashmir. Their grudge against the King naturally found way into the writings of these foreigners. Cunningham, after accusing Sikandar of worst iconoclasm when frustrated with the absence of substantial evidence against him, shifts the blame of destruction of temples in Kashmir to the equally maligned Mughal ruler Aurangzeb, saying that if it was not Sikandar then it must have been him—another iconoclast.⁶⁸ Some historians have stretched their imagination to the extent of accusing Sikandar of using gunpowder in the destruction of temples when it was not even known about in Kashmir, not to speak of its use.⁶⁹

This bias on the part of chroniclers transferred Sikandar into public memory as a vicious iconoclast and a fierce persecutor of his Hindu subjects under whose hammer “gods proved stones, and the incantations meant to invoke divine protection were reduced to babble.”⁷⁰ The succeeding writers, without challenging the veracity of the accusation, carried forward the same image of the ruler. Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz, writer and political activist with a liberal Kashmiri Brahman image, too succumbs to the temptation of blasting Sikandar as being “the blackest spot on the bright history of Kashmir.”⁷¹ Many

Hindu historians exaggerated his atrocities beyond limit and gave fullest liberty to their imagination.⁷² Some Muslim chroniclers have gone a step ahead of their Hindu counterparts. While according to Jonaraja, Shahabuddin was not an iconoclast, the anonymous author of *Baharistan-i-Shahi* attributes to him also the destruction of idols.⁷³

It would be interesting and of huge import to refer to personal observations made by two rulers of Kashmir much after Sikandar was gone from the scene. Mirza Haider Doghlat, who invaded and conquered Kashmir in 1531 AD, 117 years after Sikandar's demise, refers to more than 150 idol temples standing as "first and foremost among the wonders of Kashmir" built of blocks of hewn stone, fitted accurately one upon the other. "These stones have been so carefully placed in position, without plaster or mortar, that a sheet of paper could not be passed between the joints."⁷⁴ Or, take the testimony of the Mughal king, Jahangir (1605–27 AD), who wrote in his *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*:

The lofty idol temples which were built before the manifestations of Islam are still in existence, and are all built of stones which from foundation to roof are large and weigh 30 or 40 maunds placed one on the other.⁷⁵

What 'day and night' vandalism of temples by Sikandar is Jonaraja and some of his fellow-chroniclers then talking about?

Sikandar has been accused of, and condemned for, wanton destruction of temples in Kashmir even as possibility of other factors like earthquakes being responsible for the collapse or damage of giant stone structures is altogether ignored. It is an established historical as well as geological fact that Kashmir has suffered in the past a number of severe earthquakes that have levelled its habitations. The Valley is in seismologic Zone V and sits on, what in geological terminology is called, an active tectonic setting where earthquakes are a common occurrence. Walter Lawrence talks about as many as "eleven great earthquakes" having occurred since the 15th century AD.⁷⁶ He was an eyewitness to the massive earthquake of 1885 and observed damages caused to the temples of Patan and the palace of Srinagar.⁷⁷ In fact, the history of devastating earthquakes in Kashmir goes back in time long before the 15th century AD. A recently published research

paper in the *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* refers to the history of great earthquakes in Kashmir thus:

[S]everal severe earthquakes have also been reported to have occurred in this region [NW-SE loop of the Hazara-Kashmir Syntaxis] in the preceding 1000 years, most notably in 1501, 1555, 1669, 1736, 1779, 1824, 1828 and 1885. Historical earthquake data reveals important information about their occurrence and felt area. The seismicity appears to have occurred in close space-and-time sequence; for example, the seismic events of 2082–2041 BCE, 844 CE, 1828 CE, 1863 CE, 1877 CE and 1885 CE had a marked tendency to cluster in northwest Kashmir Valley. Moreover, major advancements in understanding earthquakes were spurred by the occurrence of catastrophic seismic events like 1555 CE and 1885 CE that attracted the attention of contemporary scholars of the time. These earthquakes have caused destructive effects on natural and built environment.⁷⁸

The paper suggests that most of the damage to Kashmir's stone temples was initiated by earthquakes. It identifies the loss of arches made of wedge-shaped blocks (keystone) and monolithic capstone roofs of temples as a common feature of these damaged structures.⁷⁹ It may be interesting for a reader to recall the observation of William Moorcroft after examining the ruined stone temples of Kashmir. The 19th century English explorer, who extensively travelled throughout the Himalayas, Tibet, Central Asia and Kashmir, speaking of these stone temples, makes the following observation:

It is scarcely possible to imagine that the state of ruin to which they have been reduced has been the work of time, or even of man, as their solidity is fully equal to that of the most massive monuments of Egypt. Earthquakes must have been the cause of their overthrow.⁸⁰

The earthquake of October 2005, originating from an active (Bagh-Balakot) fault, could be a case in point to imagine the devastations earthquakes must have wrought on Kashmir in the past. The rising mountains surrounding the Kashmir Valley, the elevated karewas (*wūdur* in local parlance) and the courses of big and small streams

attest to the fact that the Kashmir Valley is deforming and must have seen, and will see, innumerable big and small earthquakes.⁸¹ The earthquake studies have now started revealing the facts which historians either did not know or chose to ignore.

A recent study jointly conducted by an international team of geologists from the University of Colorado, USA, University of Kashmir and US Geological Survey is a watershed development in explaining the causes of damages suffered by ancient structures like temples in Kashmir. A research paper co-authored by Roger Bilham, Bikram Singh Bali, M. I. Bhat and Susan Hough and published in the Geological Society of America in its special issue of September 2010 talks about historical earthquakes in Kashmir in the light of the clues from the Shiva Temple at Pandrethan.⁸² The study concludes that the displaced blocks of the temple, a 5.5 m² masonry block structure constructed ca. AD 920, visible in the earlier extant photographs of the shrine are the result of stronger shaking in the past.

The team surveyed many of the temples in Kashmir built between 750 and 950 AD, including Nara Nar, Vijayesvara, Awantisawmi, Martand and Pandrethan temples, and noticed that while most of these had many of the columns standing (some tilted), the most glaring was the loss of capstones in the roof in all cases, be it the massive Parihasapura temple or a relatively small one like Shiva temple at Pandrethan. Bhat refers to two photographs of the Pandrethan temple taken by Geologist R. D. Oldham and Jhon Burke, both from the United Kingdom, in 1887 AD and 1868 AD, respectively, and makes the following important observation:

For a casual observer the photographs do not resolve the vandalism issue. But for an expert, both the photographs contain a wealth of information. Other than vertical cracks in the temple structure, the photographs show clear differential horizontal displacement of stone blocks. Also, several stone blocks at higher levels remain misaligned. Fire may cause cracks but it cannot cause horizontal displacement of heavy stone blocks. Moreover, it would not have caused dismantling of capstones leaving decorated stone ceiling under the roof capstones unscathed and intact. Looking at the displaced blocks in terms of their position, we notice that the displaced blocks are at higher levels (in the roof part) and not at lower levels near

the pediment—a clear sign of shaking suffered by the temple. No amount of human force could have shaken such a strong and heavy structure. Rather, it is a known fact that during an earthquake a building shakes more, therefore, experiences more damage, at higher levels than at base.⁸³

Bhat further observes:

In summary, the loss of capstones, horizontal displacement of still existing displaced stone blocks, and those that may have been repositioned in recent repairs, and vertical cracks together are the characteristic features that are known from other earthquake-damaged archaeological masonry buildings. The temple now has a tilt of 5°, which could either be earthquake-induced or, more likely, due to differential setting of the structure since it is constructed over unconsolidated sediments.

Pandrethan temple is not the only temple that bears such unmistakable and indisputable stamp of earthquake-induced damage. Each of the temples that we surveyed has lost capstones and suffered horizontal displacement and separation of stone blocks.⁸⁴

The charge of forcible conversion of Kashmiri Hindus against Sikandar is difficult to stand for the fact that when he was gone and Zainul Aabideen, Jonaraja's Narayana incarnate, assumed power and played a benefactor to his Hindu subjects, the converts did not return to their original faith, even as the king is said to have offered incentives to people for returning to their previous faith if they were converted by force. Stein is compelled by historical evidence to believe that "Islam made its way into Kashmir not by forcible conquest but by gradual conversion, for which the influx of foreign adventurers both from the south and Central Asia had prepared the ground."⁸⁵

Sikandar is also condemned for banning wine and *suttee*. These accusations cannot be used to demonize a king who wanted to eradicate evil practices from the society. Sufi argues:

On moral as well as humanitarian grounds, we cannot blame Sikandar for abolishing *Suttee*. As a matter of fact, he only forestalled Akbar and Bentinck in this respect. Sikandar cannot also be villified for attempting a dry Kashmir either.⁸⁶

An extremely significant piece of evidence, that surfaced recently in the shape of a single-headed image of Brahma in a Srinagar temple, tears into shreds the allegation against Sikandar of being an iconoclast and a ruler who banned idol making. The image located by J. L. Bhan, the then incharge Director of Central Asian Studies, University of Kashmir, in the Ganesh Mandir “is of considerable importance and pertains to the period ranging between 1389–1413 AD.”⁸⁷ The image bears the inscription *Sri Sikandara saha reoye sangapati rahulya kastve-hkena tatha* in the Sharda script on its lower portion which establishes that it was installed during the time of Sikandar.⁸⁸ Added to this is the screaming evidence in the shape of the temple atop the Takht-e-Sulaiman or Shankaracharya hill and the Shiva temple at Pandrethan exonerating him of his alleged crime of iconoclasm. Could these two iconic temples in the heart of the capital city have escaped the hammer of the iconoclast if he had such a penchant for pulling down temples? With regard to the temple atop the hill, some chronicles⁸⁹ suggest that Sikandar did not break it in deference to Mehmoond Ghazni having offered prayers here. However, Ghazni never set his foot on the soil of Kashmir. His troops had to return from the mountain passes owing to inclement weather and inaccessibility of the mountain barriers, despite defeating the army of king Samgramaraja (1003–28 AD).⁹⁰

Jonaraja and Srivara were assigned the job of chronicling Kashmir by Zainul Aabideen. An important point that strikes the mind is whether the king could have eschewed his father’s bad-mouthing description by Jonaraja. Zainul Aabideen did not live to see the chronicles completed. Jonaraja died before he had completed his own *Rajatarangini* and Srivara, who took over from him, completed the *Jainatarangini* about 20 years after the King had passed away. Obviously, either Jonaraja deliberately engaged in vilification of Sikandar, in which case, however, it has to be kept in mind that he had to submit his work to the king, or the text was tampered with after his demise as textual corruption was common with the Sanskrit texts of the past including the *Nilamata Purana* and the *Rajatarangini*. It is probable that Jonaraja’s text has not passed on to us in its original form. Srikanth Koul, the translator of Jonaraja’s *Rajatarangini*, alludes to contextual contradictions, interpolations, recessions and insertions in the text of the narrative.⁹¹

The bias against Sikandar has been religiously carried forward to the present times and his detractors leave no opportunity to whip his memory—whatever the occasion or subject. The following excerpt from an unrelated topic, Chinar, is a typical example:

Sultan Sikander ruled Kashmir and acquired notoriety as an idol breaker. He destroyed temples and shrines including those of Martand, Vijeshwari, and Sureshwari. After their destruction he built mosques over the razed ground. The Hindu shrines were associated with the plantings of ‘Bouin’ plane trees in Kashmir; those too must have been dealt with in the same way as temple structures.⁹²

It is not difficult to observe malice and distortion packaged in this appalling piece of ‘scholarship’. Neither the three temples mentioned in it were demolished by Sikandar nor were mosques built by him at their sites. The Martand temple is till this day a protected archaeological site maintained by the ASI and is a tourist attraction too. The Vijeshwar temple was visited by Sikandar’s son and successor, Zainul Aabideen, during a pilgrimage when he was accompanied by his court historian Srivara.⁹³ The ruins of Sureshwari temple at Soura were observed by archaeologist Hanry Hardy Cole even as late as towards the end of the 19th century.⁹⁴

Sikandar’s image as passed on to us is of a person symbolizing violence against Hindus. In the community literature and oral tradition of Kashmiri Pandits, he lives as a persecutor and an iconoclast of the first rate. The Brahman historians and writers, sort of, turned into zealous archaeologists digging out ruins of temples destroyed by Sikandar, as if their scholarship solely depended on the number of such destroyed temples they discovered. Like the Kashmiri proverb, *Batas bata kawa bata* (One Pandit with another Pandit is like a mountain crow), meaning if one crow caws, the whole flock caws, they joined each other in raising the noise about mass temple destruction by the 14th century Muslim king. Sikandar’s characterization as an anti-Hindu ruler, in reality, is in conflict with his tolerant behaviour towards his Hindu subjects. His first Minister was a Hindu, Rai Magre; he had a Hindu commander-in-chief, Achaladeva Achala; and he himself married a Hindu woman, Subhata, who subsequently converted to

Islam. Contrary to his image painted by biased chroniclers, Sikandar was a brave and an exceedingly generous man.⁹⁵

Notes and References

1. Hassan, *Kashmir under the Sultans*, 61.
2. Sufi, *Kashir*, I: 143. Ohind, situated few miles from Attock in Pakistan, was the capital of a Hindu kingdom.
3. Hassan, *Kashmir under the Sultans*, 62.
4. Koul, Jonaraja's *Rajatarangini*, 93.
5. Hassan, *Kashmir under the Sultans*, 62.
6. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, vol. I, Verse 638.
7. Ibid., Verse 165–69.
8. Ibid., Verse 190–91; Sufi, *Kashir*, I: 105.
9. Koul, Jonaraja's *Rajatarangini*, 57.
10. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book VII, Verses 1090–95.
11. Ibid., Verse 1344.
12. Sender, *The Kashmiri Pandits—A Study of Cultural Choice in North India*, 8; Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book VII, Verse 1243.
13. Koul, Jayalal. *Lal Ded*, 76.
14. Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 85.
15. Koul, *The Kashmiri Pandit*, 40.
16. Khoihami, *Tarikh-i-Hassan*, 195–97; Kak, *Ancient Monuments of Kashmir*, 34 quoted by Ahad, *Kashmir Rediscovered*, 121.
17. Ahad, *Kashmir Rediscovered*, 121.
18. Ibid.
19. Jonaraja, *Rajatarangini*, 59–61.
20. Stein, Annotations, *Rajatarangini*, vol. II, 304–08.
21. Jonaraja, *Rajatarangini*, 66.
22. Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 116.
23. Jonaraja, *Rajatarangini*, 59.
24. Koul, *The Kashmiri Pandit*, 49.
25. Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 115.
26. Jonaraja, *Rajatarangini*, 59–61.
27. Mirza, *Chach Nama*, 160; Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book IV, Verse 397; Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 44.
28. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book VII, Verse 1149.
29. Kilam, *A History of Kashmiri Pandits*, 10.
30. Ibid.
31. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book VII, Verses 188, 1149; Book V III, Verses 885–87, 2264, 2762–64, 2782–84.
32. Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 44.

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33. Ibid., 45.
 34. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book IV, Verse 397.
 35. Louis Massington, *The Passion of al-Hallaj*, trans. Herbert Masson, I: 178–80.
(Quoted by Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 47–48).
 36. Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 50.
 37. Jonaraja, *Rajatarangini*, 15 and 26–27.
 38. Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 51, quoting Moti Chandra's *The World of Courtesans* (chapter "The Courtesans of Kashmir"), 184.
 39. *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book VII, Verse 1230–32.
 40. Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 52.
 41. *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book IV, Verse 589; Book V, Verse 177; Book VII, Verses 119, 125, 126; Book VIII, Verse 131.
 42. Yule, *Travels of Marco Polo*, I, 167.
 43. Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 54.
 44. *Baharistan-i-Shahi*, ff. 6b, 7a. Haidar Malik also refers to these discussions, 37.
 45. Jonaraja, *Rajatarangini*, 20–21.
 46. Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 86.
 47. Bhat, *Tarikh-i-Kashmir* by Saiyid Ali, 29–30.
 48. Ibid., 29.
 49. Ibid.
 50. Koul, Jonaraja's *Rajatarangini*, 32.
 51. Ibid., 37.
 52. Ibid., 32.
 53. Sufi, *Kashir*, I: 146; Hassan, *Kashmir under the Sultans*, 64.
 54. Koul, Jonaraja's *Rajatarangini*, 18.
 55. Ibid., 42 and 112.
 56. Ibid., 95.
 57. Ibid., 26.
 58. Ibid., 97.
 59. Ibid., 32.
 60. Ibid., 36.
 61. Stein, *The Ancient Geography of Kashmir*, 434. Stein quotes Allami (*The Ain-i-Akbari*, 364) in support of the argument.
 62. *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book V, Verse 161.
 63. Stein, *The Ancient Geography of Kashmir*, 434, fn. 20. Bachbattas were Brahmins who studied Sanskrit and took charge of the religious affairs of the community as compared to *Karkunkabbatas* who took up government jobs.
 64. Knowles, *A Dictionary of Kashmiri Proverbs and Sayings*, 139–41.
 65. Ahad, *Kashmir Rediscovered*, 125–26.
 66. Pandita, *Baharistan-i-Shahi*, 38; Ahad, *Kashmir Rediscovered*, 126.
 67. Bhar, *Tarikh-i-Kashmir* by Saiyid Ali, 135.
 68. Elliot and Dawson, *History of India*, VI: 457–59.
 69. Captain Cunningham believes that the complete disruptive overturn of the temples could only have been produced by gunpowder. Dr. Stein, however,

- remarks: 'This early use of gunpowder in Kashmir has been doubted by others, and I believe rightly. Earthquakes and the imperfect fitting of the stones, observable in all Kashmirian temples, are sufficient to explain the complete ruin, notwithstanding the massive character of the materials. (Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 190)
70. Koul, Jonaraja's *Rajatarangini*, 96.
 71. Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, 55.
 72. Ibid.
 73. Koul, Jonaraja's *Rajatarangini*, 90
 74. Dughlat, *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*, 426.
 75. Rogers and Beveridge, *Memoirs of Jahangir*, II: 150.
 76. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 21
 77. Ibid., 213. In 1967, the Anantnag earthquake caused heavy damage to the 8th century Martand Temple in south Kashmir.
 78. Ahmad, "Seismic Risk Reduction Through Indigenous Architecture in Kashmir Valley," 110–17.
 79. Ibid.
 80. Moorcroft and Trebeck, *Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Hindustan and the Punjab*, II: 245.
 81. M. I. Bhat, "Earthshaking Science in Inter-community Issues," *Greater Kashmir*, 13 August 2009.
 82. Bilham, Bali, Bhat and Hough, "Historical Earthquakes in Srinagar, Kashmir: Clues from the Shiva Temple at Pandrethan," 107–17.
 83. Ibid.
 84. Ibid.
 85. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, I: 130.
 86. Sufi, *Kashir*, I: 149.
 87. Bhan, *Kashmir Sculptures*, 68. The image was first time published by the author in *Shiraza*, 20–24.
 88. Bhat (Trans), *Tarikh-i-Kashmir* by Saiyid Ali, 155.
 89. *Wajeez-ut-Tawareekh* and *Tarikh-i-Hassan*.
 90. Sufi, *Kashir*, I: 59.
 91. Koul, Jonaraja's *Rajatarangini*, 18.
 92. Wanchoo, *Chinar Tree*.
 93. *Jainatarangini*, Verses 95–106, translated by Dr. Raghunath Singh; J. C. Dutt, 146–48.
 94. Bandey, *Contours of Srinagar* 31.
 95. Sufi, *Kashir*, I: 149, 152.

Chapter Four

Power

Towards his last days, while reflecting on his life and experiences, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah¹ described Kashmiri Pandits as ‘The Fifth Columnists’ and ‘The Instruments of Tyranny’.² The sweeping portrayal of a community by a person accused of having handed over Kashmir to India on a platter to answer the wishes of this minuscule minority looks incredible. Was the Kashmir’s ‘tallest leader’ being unsavoury during his last days towards a community that had earlier bestowed upon him the title of Vishnu incarnate?³ To find an answer, a journey through the history of Kashmir with focus on this generally perceived wise community, that formed a merely 4 per cent of Kashmir’s population but “exerted influence out of all proportion to its numbers,”⁴ is a prerequisite.

The Kashmiri Pandits are *Shaivite* Hindus who consider themselves as ‘the twice born’ and a special race above the rest. In a caste-driven Hindu society, they form the uppermost caste of Brahmans even as the other three castes of Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras are non-existent in Kashmir. Their fair complexion has earned them many a praise in poetry and prose. Regardless of being a small minority, they have played a vital role in politics of the Indian subcontinent and excelled in almost all fields. They became a catalyst for political developments to flow in the reverse direction with a Muslim-majority Kashmir finding itself aligned with a Hindu-majority India in 1947. They constituted a minuscule percentage of Kashmir’s population before their migration in 1990 in the wake of an armed rebellion by Kashmiri Muslims against the Indian rule. They claim to be the only aborigines of Kashmir. For the richness of mysticism, philosophy, politics, art and literature, the community’s contribution is noteworthy. Mystic poetess Laleshwari, philosopher Abhinavgupta, politicians

Jawaharlal Nehru and Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sanskrit poets Bilhana and Kalhana, Urdu litterateurs Ratan Nath Sarshar, Brij Narayan Chakbast and Daya Shankar Naseem, poets of Kashmiri language, Krishna Joo Razdan and Dina Nath Nadim, a prominent poet of Persian language, Daya Ram Khushdil and film actors Raj Kumar, Jeevan and A. K. Hangal are some of the prominent persons that instantly come to mind as great names in different walks of life. Within Kashmir, the community's contribution to education and medicine and in producing some of the finest teachers and doctors is widely acknowledged. Poet and philosopher, Sir Muhammad Iqbal, who himself had Kashmiri ancestry, is eloquent in praise of the Kashmiri Brahmins whom he defines as vibrant at hearts, keen of eye, mature, strenuous in action and the stars of Kashmir's horizon. He writes:

*A'an Brahman zaadganan-e-zindah dil
 Laleh-e-ahmar zi rooye sha'n khajil
 Tez been-o- pukhta kaar-o- sakht kosh
 Az nigah-e-sha'n farang andar kharosh
 Asl-e-sha'n az khaake-e-daamangeer ma'st
 Matla-e-ein akhtara'n Kashmir ma'st*

[Those scions of Brahmins with vibrant hearts, their glowing cheeks put the red tulip to shame. Keen of eye, mature and strenuous in action, their very glance puts Europe into commotion. Their origin is from this protesting soil of ours, the rising place of these stars is our Kashmir.]

The Kashmiri Pandits insist on being called as such instead of Kashmiri Hindus. The community maintains that it was to distinguish them from other upper caste Hindus of India known as the Brahmins. Within Kashmir, since the community belonged to the same Brahman category of Hindus, the designation 'Kashmiri Pandit' was irrelevant and they were, as are till date, known as Batta(s). They are mutton-eating Brahmins. Also, against other non-vegetarian Hindus who consume *jhatka* meat, they eat *halaal*. Rama and Krishna, the prominent Hindu gods, were not worshipped by them. There were no temples consecrated to them in Kashmir. It was only during the Dogra Hindu rule (1846–1947) that such temples were constructed in Kashmir and in deference to their rulers, the Pandits

started celebrating Janmashtami and Diwali and visiting Ram and Hanuman temples. In fact, their Janmashtami is different from that observed by other Hindus. They call it Zaram Sattam and celebrate it a day before Hindus do in India. The practice of *suttee* once widespread among the Hindus in India was unknown to Kashmiri Pandits although Kalhana's account establishes the custom being practised by royal ladies in ancient Kashmir.⁵ The "first incident" that happened in Srinagar is reported during the Sikh rule (1819–46) when Moti Ram was the *subedar*.⁶ Manohar Nath Tickoo points out the absence of 'cultural, ethical and religious semblance' between Kashmir and India and identifies many a dissimilarity between Kashmiri Hindus and Indian Hindus in the observance of rituals and ceremonies:

Kashmiri Pundits have totally different religious ceremonial and ritual days than of the Indian Hindus and we practice a different mythology. We have no religious attachment with river Ganga; we used to put the ashes of the dead into the "Naraan Nag Gangbal" near Sonamarg. We never celebrate Diwali but "Hearath". We celebrate a religious day which is called "Sheshar Shenkraat" which is celebrated in the winters in order to avoid demonic influence in winters and there is no example of celebrating such a day in the Indian Hindu mythology. Moreover, Kashmiri Pundits celebrate "Shiv Raatri" differently than Indian Hindus; we prepare a lot of non vegetarian food to break the fast, contrary to Hindus who abstain from meat on the day.⁷

Walter Lawrence observes Kashmiri Pandits as "extremely strict in following the rules of Brahmanism when they visit India, but in their own country they do things which would horrify the orthodox Hindus."⁸ Another interesting thing he narrates "is that they worship the likelihood of Her Majesty the Queen Empress."⁹ This, he adds, prevails not only among the Pandits of the city, but also among the village Hindus. During World War I, Kashmiri Pandits held special prayers at the famous Sharika Devi Temple in Srinagar on 4 August 1918, seeking goddess Sharika's blessings for the victory of King George V of the United Kingdom. Invoking the "All pervading power of that omnipotent, spotless and formless supreme being Shri Shanka Ji, we the Kashmiri Pandits subjects of Kashap Mar [Kashmir]" chanted:

Oh, Thou Ruler of rulers, cause the despotic German Emperor to be trampled under the feet of our Benign Emperor George V. Let the British Flag be waved through the length and breadth of his territory.... Oh, Mother Thou art Omniscient and can perceive the agonies of our hearts. Thou who in the twinkle of an eye destroyed the wicked and the proud as Ravana and the deluded as Mahi Ravana and thus restored happiness to the world—Why delayth Thou in our appeal. Now be Thou pleased to accept our prayer and give us an opportunity to approach Thy feet with happy hearts singing Hymns of British victory. We bow before Thee Oh Goddess.¹⁰

A Pandit would not eat or drink from the hands of a Muslim although from his birth to death Muslims played vital roles in his life. While the ‘twice born’ openly practised apartheid against his Muslim compatriots, he had no qualms about his children being born at the hands of a Muslim midwife¹¹ or his dead cremated by a Muslim *kawji*.¹² He was also comfortable at a Muslim holding an umbrella over the head of his bridegroom son.¹³ He would not touch poultry or eggs, but would eat wild fowls and eggs of the lake birds and insist these were slaughtered in a Muslim fashion. Since the Kashmiri Pandits consider themselves as a superior race, they do not follow trades that are low in status. Hence, from a foster mother of his children,¹⁴ a cobbler, a potter, a person who fries corns, a porter, a boatman, a carpenter, a mason or a fruit seller,¹⁵ a Kashmiri Brahman was dependent on a Muslim but would not allow him entry into his kitchen even if he was a friend or a domestic help.

A Pandit can be persistent when it comes to pursuing his case and will find newer and intelligent ways of persuasion if the previous failed. Lawrence recalls an interesting anecdote:

A Pandit whose petition had been three times rejected, appeared a fourth time, and I told him if he presented another petition I should have to report him to the local official. The next day the Pandit appeared with a paper in his hand; he was at once ordered to be removed, but explained that it was not a petition but a poem which he wished to present. The poem recited his grievances.¹⁶

A study of Kashmir's history shows that the Pandit community has wielded enormous influence on the affairs of the state, and its members always held power and clout, irrespective of who ruled Kashmir. One of the reasons for this is the importance they accorded to education. They were quick to learn the languages of the rulers. Some within the community itself, though, admit that "where what is required is flattery, who can beat the Pandit."¹⁷ Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah's one time close associate, Mohammad Sayeed Masoodi, however, has his own explanation of a Pandit being indispensable for a ruler. In his words:

Suppose you are driving a bus which is filled with passengers and there is no space left even for a blade of grass to accommodate. All of a sudden you see a Pandit on the road signalling you to stop and let him board the lorry. There is zero possibility of taking him in but if you have to reach your destination you will have to make room for him even if it means carrying him on your shoulder. Otherwise, he will lie in the middle of the road and not let you move an inch.¹⁸

The journey of the Kashmir's minority community from Kashmiri Hindus to Kashmiri Pandits is related to the Mughal rule when members of the community started trickling out of the confines of the Valley into a wider arena of India. There, the sense of pride and belonging to a special creed, which they possessed, received a jolt. They felt like being drowned in an ocean of Hindu society that had its own Brahmins and upper caste elite. The members of the community through their quality of adaptability and serving the powers had won hearts of the occupying Mughal nobility in Kashmir. They were looked upon by the ruling class as trustworthy people in comparison to the Muslim majority that resisted the Mughal occupation of Kashmir. This trust earned the immigrant Kashmiri Hindus some important positions in the corridors of power in Delhi, Agra and Lucknow. One such person who endeared himself to one of the last remnants of the Mughal Empire, King Mohammad Shah, was Jai Ram Bhan who was his courtier. Bhan persuaded Mohammad Shah to issue a royal decree designating Kashmiri Brahmins as Kashmiri Pandits,¹⁹ thus drawing a line of distinction between the Brahmins of Kashmir and those of

India. In the medieval period, when Kashmiris en masse converted to Islam, there remained just a small section of Brahmins who did not convert and represented Hinduism in the country.²⁰

It is a common refrain of Hindus in India and Kashmir that Islam spread by sword. If we believe Jonaraja or his later-date version, Jia Lal Kilam, the conversion to Islam was brought about by persecution. The blame of bringing about wholesale conversion of Hindus through repression is squarely placed at the door of Sultan Sikandar and his neo-convert prime minister, Suhabhatta. In support of their argument, the persecution theorists quote Muslim historians such as Muhammad Din Fauq and Hassan Khoihami who followed Jonaraja and others like him in alluding to the alleged hounding of the Hindus. However, an important aspect missed here is that if the mass conversion was brought about through persecution and the Hindus had no option but to convert or face death then why the proselytes did not revert to their original faith once Sikandar and Suhabhatta were gone and a ‘benevolent and secular-to-the-core’ Zainul Aabideen assumed power? The latter is believed to have issued an order “allowing all those who had embraced Islam under pressure to return to their faith if they so wished.”²¹

To describe the situation in which the Kashmiri Brahmins were after the alleged ‘slaughter, forcible conversion and migration’, a common refrain of the persecution theorists is that only “eleven families of Brahmins were left in Kashmir.”²² However, as late as 1517 AD, historian Sukha Pandit informs us that “thousands” of them attended a religious ritual at Harmukta Ganga of whom 10,000 perished after falling from a precipice when lightning struck them.²³ What would be the size of the population of a community in the country whose members had gathered in such huge numbers only at one place. The myth of ‘eleven families’ is exploded by the early 17th century Persian chronicle, *Baharistan-i-Shahi*, whose statistical data shows that there lived 1,200 Hindu families as comfortably as those of Muslims.²⁴

The advent of Islam in Kashmir was not an isolated happening. By the time it overtook the land, the Islamic breeze blowing from the Arabian Peninsula had already gained a foothold in the Indian subcontinent and nearby countries. The religion had arrived through Arab traders and the companions of Prophet Muhammad (peace

be upon him) in Indonesia, Malaysia, Malabar Coast and parts of China in the 7th century AD where no Sikandar or Aurangzeb had brandished his sword.²⁵ Towards the east of its place of origin in the Arab Peninsula, Islam had entered Iran and Afghanistan around the same time. In the modern-day Pakistan, the first mosque was built in Sindh in the 8th century, while in North India, Islam had pronouncedly arrived in the 12th century. The arrival of Islam in Kashmir, if anything, was delayed owing to the geographical conditions that made the country a landlocked area making access to it and inflow of ideas difficult. However, traces of Islamic influence had seeped into the Valley centuries before Muslims came to power in Kashmir. Muslim generals and soldiers were employed in the armies of Kashmir as early as in the 11th century AD, when Harsha (1089–1101 AD) was on the throne.²⁶

Kashmir could not have remained isolated for long from the sway Islam held on people living on its peripheries. While there can be no denying that an individual ruler or his henchmen might have used force in some cases to ensure conversions but where is the coercion in the spread of Islam in Kashmir when the first known convert to the faith is the ruler of the time himself? Rinchana's conversion at the hands of Saiyid Abdur Rehman Bulbul Shah contradicts all the later day persecution theorists. That Rinchana, who was a Buddhist, wanted to embrace Hinduism but was not allowed to do so by the elitist Brahmins is a subsequent explanation offered by Jonaraja, a century later, to downplay the peaceful mass conversion through preaching.²⁷ We have already seen the prejudice Jonaraja nursed against Islam and the unease with which he saw the religion peacefully flourishing in Kashmir.

The Kashmiris have been open to new ideas. In matters of religion too, they did not shut themselves up against incoming influences and when they found them more practical for attaining the Ultimate Truth or achieving salvation, they did not shy away from accepting these. When Hinduism was declining as the faith of people in Kashmir, the teachings of Gautama the Buddha received universal acceptance across the length and breadth of the country. Kashmir became one of the most important centres for the spread and development of the new faith. It is generally believed that Buddhism

became dominant in Kashmir during the reign of Emperor Ashoka (3rd century BC), although it was widespread here long before his time. There were many Buddhist *viharas* in Kashmir before Ashoka, while Chinese sources assert that Buddhism had spread in Kashmir just 50 years after *Mahaparinirvana* of *Tathagata*.²⁸

In the year 530 AD, Kashmir witnessed the Hun intrusion in the person of marauding Mihirakula and his tribe that perennially changed the political and social landscape of the country. Kalhana describes the cruel person that Mihirakula was in the following words:

The people knew his approach by noticing the vultures, crows and other [birds] which were flying ahead eager to feed on those who were being slain within his armies' [reach].²⁹

Mihirakula had no pity for children, no compassion for women and no respect for the aged.³⁰ When he was about to enter Kashmir along with his horde, he heard the terrified cry of an elephant that had fallen over a precipice. He was so thrilled that he had a hundred other elephants rolled down by force.³¹ His predatory character is also chronicled by the famous 7th century AD Chinese traveller, Hiuen Tsiang, and a compatriot pilgrim, Sung-yun, who interviewed the monster.³²

Mihirakula or Mihiragula, as some sources call him, was the leader of the White Huns who later became the rulers of the territories conquered by them from Kabul to Central India. He was an enemy of Buddhism and destroyed Buddhist shrines in Kashmir. He was extremely barbaric, hypocrite, trouble inflictor and a deceptive turn-coat who had spread the network of fake, deceiving and sly *sadhus* and Brahmans throughout India who exploited simpleton Hindus in the name of religion.³³ By their cunningness they would make Hindus fight among themselves and several rulers got entangled in bloody fights by paying heed to them.³⁴ Taking advantage of the fact that Hindus of India always respected sadhus and Brahmans, this group exploited them. They pretended to be Brahmans but clandestinely ate mutton and fish, an abhorrent act for a Brahman, and indulged in all kinds of vices. In the words of B. K. Mukherji:

This sly horde had made the lives of true Hindus miserable.³⁵

When the activities of this pack became intolerable, the rajas of India decided to exterm them to a place wherefrom they cannot return.³⁶ According to Stein:

After extensive campaigns, Mihirakula was defeated by Baladitya of Maghada and Yasodharman, and forced to retire around 530 AD to Kashmir and adjoining regions.³⁷

Baladitya had captured Mihirakula and was about to kill him when the former's mother intervened and persuaded her son to spare him. Mihirakula then fled to Kashmir where he was warmly received by the king and placed in charge of a small territory. However, true to his character, he later fomented rebellion, killed the king and assumed power himself.³⁸

Mihirakula was a patron of *Shaivism*.³⁹ The "evidence of his coins, in the emblems of bull and trident and in the legends *jayatu trsa, jayatu vrsadvaja*, display a distinct leaning towards *S'ainivism*."⁴⁰ He founded *Mihiresvara* (shrine of Shiva) at Srinagari and in Holada (Vular pargana) the large town called Mihirapura.⁴¹ Very significantly, he brought to Kashmir Brahmans from Gandhara who resembled him in their habits and bestowed a thousand *agraharas* on them at Vijeshwara (Bijbihara).⁴² "While the *Naga* cult and Buddhism remained successively the main faiths of Kashmir before the 6th century AD, the *Shaiva* and *Vais'navi Brahmanism* dominated the religious scene of Kashmir thence forward until Islam earned mass conversion"⁴³ during the 14th–16th century AD. This was also the period when the religious text on sacred places, rituals and ceremonials of Kashmir, the *Nilamata Purana* (6th–7th century AD) and the *mahatmyas* were written after wiping out Buddhism from Kashmir. The *Shaivite* Hinduism in Kashmir is the post-Mihirakula-arrival development, and its profound appearance is traced to the late 8th or the beginning of the 9th century AD.⁴⁴

The birth of *Shaivism* resulted in a new narrative on Kashmir's physical and cultural history that is sought to be fervently guarded till this day. The Kashmiri *Shaivites* distinctly identified themselves as different from other Hindus, adopting their own rituals and festivals. Their shrines and fairs were restricted to Kashmir. They would not celebrate Diwali, the biggest Hindu festival, but observe Shivratri with

much zeal and zest. They created a parallel Ganges, sacred river for Hindus, a separate sangam, and their dress, jewellery and marriage rituals were quite apart from those of other Hindus.⁴⁵ Prominent Hindu gods, Ram and Krishna, were not included in their worship. The propounders of *Shaivism*, wearing the mask of Brahmins and with royal patronage, swiftly occupied positions of power and influence. Being crafty and clever, they exploited the religious susceptibility of common masses and maneuvered their own intrusion in the corridors of power even when their patron Mihirakula was long gone. By holding the highest religious positions and knowledge of texts, they wielded tremendous influence and were thus sought after by every succeeding ruler. This situation continued till the 14th century AD when Islam made a prominent entry into Kashmir and the establishment of the Sultanate changed the political and social landscape.

In the meanwhile, we see the Hindu society in Kashmir on gradual decay with all kinds of vices afflicting the people. The Brahmins were in the vanguard of this march to decadence. Kalhana attributes to *Bhattas* "sale of their wives and licentiousness of their women-folk."⁴⁶ Ksemendra and Kalhana both talk of

extreme depravity that had pervaded the Shaiva gurus. In *Desopadesa* and *Narmamala*, Ksemendra delineates the 'voluptuousness' of Shaiva teachers.⁴⁷ They carried on illicit relations even with the wives of their pupils. They nurtured lasciviousness, ire, jealously, covetousness, capriciousness—in fact all evil deeds. They had a liaison with prostitutes and enjoyed drinks in their company.⁴⁸

They have been described as "guides of rogues who consulted them for success in their vicious deeds."⁴⁹ Ksemendra also describes as commonplace the practice among Shaiva gurus to change cults.⁵⁰

By the time Simhadeva (1286–1300 AD) was on the throne, we see Kashmir having turned into "a country of drunkards and gamblers and women were no better than they should be."⁵¹ The main features of the religious life included moral depravity among the priests and gurus, cooperative relations between the rulers and the Brahmins and superimposition of Brahmins.⁵² "There were many Saiva [Shaiva] sects with hardly anything common save that all of them regarded Siva as the

cosmic overlord. Broadly speaking there were three types of Saivites who may be classified as semi-Vedic, non-Vedic and anti-Vedic.⁵³

As we have observed earlier, Kashmir's contact with Islam preceded the establishment of the Muslim Sultanate in the 14th century AD by a couple of centuries. The presence of Muslims in Kashmir was observed as early as in the 8th century AD and by the 11th century AD they were occupying high positions in the army.⁵⁴ Kashmir was being gradually influenced by the preaching of Muslim teachers, and by the time Suhadeva (1301–20 AD) ascended the throne, a fair proportion of the population had already accepted Islam.⁵⁵ The establishment of the Sultanate and the arrival of Muslim preachers presented a new situation as the religious and cultural scenario of Kashmir saw a swift and colossal change. However, it was only by the end of the 16th century AD that Kashmir was a mass Muslim society.⁵⁶

The new situation left the small section of Brahmans, who stuck to their belief, in a quandary as they were taken over by the feeling of sudden loss of power and their sway over the population which had now adopted a new faith that brought with it its own religious teachers. The mantle of interpreting and propagating religion, the task that was earlier handled by the Brahmans with clout and power, now fell upon the *saiyyads* who accompanied in hundreds the Muslim preachers such as Mir Saiyid Ali Hamdani and his son Mir Muhammad Hamdani. The advent of Muslim rule in Kashmir and mass conversion of Hindus to Islam, however, did not result in any significant change in the clout of Kashmiri Brahmans with the powers that be. Except during the period of Sikandar when their own converted blood, Suhabhatta, was at the helm of affairs and allegedly settled personal scores with them, the Brahmans continued to be at the positions of power. In the words of Professor Mohammad Ashraf Wani:

Though Islam became the court religion in 1343 [AD] after Shahmir ascended the throne, the administration continued to be in the hands of the traditional class—the Brahmans.⁵⁷

The retention of their old creed did not result in loss of their status and they continued to follow their old religion.⁵⁸ In the subsequent years, especially during the period of Zaian-ul-Aabideen, we observe the Kashmiri Brahmans ruling the roost. They held higher positions in

the administration and came to prominence. Some, like Shri Bhatta, would be in constant attendance of the king.⁵⁹ The Brahmins like him used their influence to benefit their community.⁶⁰ The village administration was totally in their hands. They were in charge of land settlement and agriculture. Gopala Koul, Madho Koul and Ganesha Koul, as the chief and two provincial heads of land settlement and agriculture, appointed men of their own community on subordinate positions like of *patwaris*.⁶¹ Apart from Shri Bhatta, Jonaraja and Srivara who enjoyed the King's patronage, there were many others from the community who held positions of power and influence. Among these were Sadasheo Bayu, Soma Pandit, Sumitra Bhatta, Rupya Bhatta, Karpur Bhatta, Yodha Bhatta, Rupya Bhanda and Jaya Bhatta. There were other Pandits who were given strictly confidential diplomatic missions to execute.⁶² The influence of the Brahmins on Zainul Aabideen was so great that "he forbade the killing of fish in certain tanks and meat eating on some days."⁶³

During the Chak rule, the Brahmins continued to serve in the administration and to receive land grants. Towards the close of the 15th century AD when Hussain Shah (1563–70) was the ruler, we see Kashmiri Brahmins enjoying the patronage of the royal court with *mathas* built and villages endowed in their favour.⁶⁴ The king also "participated in Hindu religious festivals and invited Brahmins to his court."⁶⁵

At the fall of the 16th century AD, Kashmir lost its independence to Mughal India when Akbar's troops annexed the country. As an occupation force, their presence was resisted by Kashmiri Muslims. The loss of freedom was a great shock and setback to them. Akbar used all his tactics to subdue the people but could not earn their love and goodwill. However, he succeeded in enlisting support of the Brahmins who received his special attention and patronage. "The Kashmiri Brahmins chose to identify with the Mughal system."⁶⁶ The establishment of the Mughal rule in Kashmir opened "a new vista"⁶⁷ for them. After one of his visits to Kashmir, Akbar left along with "a number of Pandits like flies stick to sweet,"⁶⁸ chief amongst them was Pandit Sada Koul who was very well treated by Jahangir and Shah Jahan also, and bestowed highest titles such as *Itmadul Saltanat* (Trust of the Empire), *Mushir-ul-Mulk* (Advisor of the State) and *Gam Khaar* (Sympathiser). Such was the influence of the Brahmins on Akbar.

that he distributed rent-free lands to them, received them with great sympathy in his court and partook in their religious festivals.⁶⁹ The community enjoyed fruits of power while the majority of the population was forced to live a life of complete political disempowerment as a matter of State policy. The Kashmiri Muslims were ousted from the channels of administration. No place of administrative trust was reserved for them, and for utilizing the local talent, the Brahmins were picked up even as the senior administrative functionaries like *subedars* were deputed from Delhi. Seeking to crush the martial spirit of Kashmiri Muslims, Akbar closed their entry into the army, while its doors were kept open for their Hindu compatriots, and for long, the defence of the border areas was entrusted to them as an expression of trust that the Mughals reposed in the community.⁷⁰ Miru Pandit was appointed to the command in Nur Jahan's bodyguard.⁷¹ The powerful Muslim families such as the Shah Mirs, Chaks, Magres, Rainas, Maliks and Bhats were pulled down from high pedestals, and within a short span of time they were forgotten.⁷² The Brahmins took to learning of Persian, now the court language, to occupy virtually all positions in the administration.

The Kashmiri Brahmins became the eyes and ears of the Mughal imperialism in Kashmir. While we hardly find any Kashmiri Muslim notable mentioned in the Mughal history of Kashmir, there are references to many a Kashmiri Brahman such as Tota Ram, Miru Pandit, Bulaqi Pandit, Makund Pandit, Pandit Mahadeo, Mahesh Shankar Das and Mukund Ram Khar serving the Mughals at positions of influence. The first Kashmiri Brahman to have surfaced at the Mughal court was Sadanand Koul who had met Akbar during one of his three visits to Kashmir when the King invited him to Agra.⁷³ He earned favours from Jahangir and Shah Jahan also. Chander Bhan, Dina Nath Madan and Janardhan Zutshi⁷⁴ are some other Pandits whose names we come across as men of influence and high position in the Mughal court. In order to kill the urge of Kashmiris to regain freedom, Akbar utilized the Kashmiri Brahmins as informants of the Mughal court and they willingly obliged.⁷⁵

The royal patronage enjoyed by Kashmiri Brahmins during the Mughal occupation of Kashmir was not confined to Akbar's period but continued throughout this imperialist rule. "Even during the reign of

Aurangzeb the Pandits occupied a very high place in the country" and "the local bureaucracy was mainly manned by them."⁷⁶ The service linkages with the Mughals even changed the surnames of the Kashmiri Brahman families. The Gurtoos acquired the surname of Bahadur as a result of service in the imperial force. The Kouls after being appointed to positions in the treasury became Bakhshis. Some Kouls became Nigari Kouls for their association with *naggar khana*. A branch of the Dhar family adopted Shah as surname after a member of the family was awarded for his performance at an imperial *mushaira* and the king remarked that he looked like a Shah.⁷⁷ The migration of the Kashmiri Pandits continued, and their presence at the Mughal capital "grew even as the boundaries of the empire shrank."⁷⁸ The Nehrus arrived in Delhi in 1716 AD during the reign of Farrukhsiyar (1713–19).

The Mughals snatched trade and commerce from the Muslims and passed it into the hands of the Hindus.⁷⁹ The amount of influence enjoyed by the Brahmans could be gauged by the fact that by their "propaganda and similar kind of offices,"⁸⁰ Abu Barkat Khan was appointed as *subedar* of Kashmir five times. Even after the Mughals were gone, Kashmiri Brahmans who, by now, at the behest Jai Ram Bhan, had earned a royal decree from Mohammad Shah designating them as Kashmiri Pandits, continued to be a powerful class as we see Mahanand Dar rising to the position of prime minister during Sukh Jivan's (1754–62 AD) 'independent rule'.

The cleverness with which the Pandit officials served the Mughal regime in Kashmir is exemplified by an incident during the reign of Shah Jahan which gave birth to a Kashmiri proverb, *Daryawik malakh gaenzrawin* (To count the waves of the river). J. H. Knowels, who wrote *A Dictionary of Kashmiri Proverbs and Sayings*, narrates the incident thus:

Ali Mardan Khan (cir. 1650 AD) was a governor under the Emperor of Kashmir Shah Jahan. He had two especial servants, one a Muhammedan and the other a Hindu. The Muhammedan worked all the day, but the Pandit, who worked only for one hour, received more salary than the Muhammedan. The latter petitioned the king, that he would at least give him an equal salary. The king promised that he would do so if the Muhammedan would go and count the waves of the river and

tell him how many they were. The Muhammedan went away at once, but soon found that he could not oblige the king. On his return, when the king asked him how many waves there were, he replied, "I have forgotten." Then the king ordered the Pandit to go and count the waves. The Pandit consented on the condition that the king would allow him two thousand rupees and one hundred soldiers for this purpose. The king gave him what he asked for, and away went the Pandit to his task. At every turn or passage of the river he placed four soldiers and a toll house, and ordered them to take four rupees from each boat which went up or down. The excuse to the boatmen, when they demurred, was that they had hindered the Pandit in counting the waves of the river, and therefore they were thus fined. In this way he obtained a lakh of rupees, and then went to the king. In reply to the king's question how many waves there were, the Pandit threw down the bags of rupees at the ruler's feet, saying "One lakh, your Majesty." This Pandit was promoted to a very high post, whilst the Mohammedan was debased. The natives say that Ali Mardan Khan introduced custom-houses into Kashmir at this Pandit's advice.⁸¹

The Mughal decline paved the way for the Afghan rule over Kashmir which is reckoned as one of the worst periods of occupation. However, despite annexation, Kashmir was not an integrated part of Afghanistan and direct control was nominal. The concern of Kabul extended only to the treasury, and a few Kashmiri Pandits were the instruments of the Afghans.⁸² As is substantiated by history,

[T]he lot of Kashmiri Pandits when compared to other people [read Muslims] was indeed happier...the political power was generally and largely centred in their hands. During the Afghan rule a number of Kashmiri Pandits manoeuvred themselves to prominent positions in the country's administration.⁸³ The local bureaucracy was manned by the Pandits and some of them were employed in offices even in Kabul.⁸⁴

Pandit Nand Ram Tiku became prime minister of Kabul, and his name appeared on coins issued from there.⁸⁵ The Afghans preferred to govern Kashmir through Kashmiri Pandits.⁸⁶ Some Pandit families such as the Dhars, Koulis, Tikkus and Saprus constantly appear in public

service during the Afghan rule.⁸⁷ The Dhar and the Tikku families openly displayed loyalty to the Afghans and were engaged in a tug of war with governors of Kashmir for their failure to remit revenues to the Kabul treasury.⁸⁸ A branch of Kouls acquired the family surname of Jalali by serving the Afghans. One of the two advisors of Governor Nooruddin Khan was Mahanand Pandit Dhar.⁸⁹ He was in charge of revenue collection. Kailash Pandit Dhar was *sahibkar*.⁹⁰ “The Kashmiri Pandits were so well entrenched in the revenue administration that Mir Hazar Khan attempted to shut down the departments entirely when he was governor in 1793 as the only way to eliminate the Pandits, and forbid them to study Persian.”⁹¹ Kailas Dar and Pandit Dila Ram Quli were appointed to the highest position of *sahibkar*, equivalent in responsibilities to the post of *madarulmiham* or prime minister of the time. The latter was, in the subsequent years, appointed as *madarulmiham* by Governor Azad Khan and, in turn, gave full support to the “veritable scourge on earth for the tormentation of otherwise innocent denizens.”⁹² Zairam Bhan rose to the position of diwan.⁹³ Sukh Jeevan, an Afghan Hindu who killed Khawja Abdullah and declared himself as governor in his place, appointed Mahanand Dhar, a Kashmiri Pandit, as his prime minister. At the incitement of Dhar, the new governor subjected Kashmiris to considerable oppression, banned *azan* and put a stop to cow slaughter. He disbanded the Muslim soldiers and replaced them with Sikhs and Hindus from the Punjab.⁹⁴ Dila Ram Quli, a Kashmiri Pandit advisor of Governor Azad Khan, “supported him in his merciless methods of administration.”⁹⁵ George Froster records Azad Khan as “an object of such terror to Kashmiris that the casual mention of his name produced an instant horror and involuntary supplication of the aid of their Prophet.”⁹⁶ Quli, who by now had reached the position of the prime minister, was the instigator of Shia–Sunni riots in Kashmir in 1786 AD and was eventually beheaded at Khanyar for his misdeeds.⁹⁷

The Pandit community legends describe the Afghan rule in Kashmir as a period of their worst persecution, persuading Walter Lawrence to present a horrific picture of that era. According to him, one of the Afghan governors, Azad Khan, engaged himself in a “practice to tie up the Pandits two and two in grass sacks and sink them in [the] Dal Lake” and “a pitcher of ordure would be placed on a Pandit’s

head and Mussalmans would pelt the pitcher until it broke, the unfortunate Hindu being blinded with filth.”⁹⁸ The narrators of this legend, however, do not have any regard for the time of occurrence and characters involved in the alleged brutality. Kilam attributes the cruelty to Hazar Khan, sixth governor after Azad Khan and, importantly, makes no mention of pitchers of ordure being broken on the heads of the Pandits.⁹⁹ That the stories of pitchers of ordure and drowning in the Dal Lake are a later day addition is proved by the fact that Birbal Kachroo, a Kashmiri Pandit chronicler who lived through the Afghan rule and composed the *Majmoo-e-Tawarikh*, does not record any such cruelty against the Pandits. In fact, he mentions an Afghan governor, Karimdad Khan, seizing Muzaffarabad and taking thousands of Bombas, a Muslim warrior tribe, as prisoners and drowning some of them daily in the Dal Lake over a period of time.¹⁰⁰ It appears that the Bombas of Muzaffarabad were replaced by Kashmiri Pandits by some later day Brahman ‘historian’. Henny Sender, after extensively going through and writing about the history of the Kashmiri Pandits, is obliged to observe that later historians “tended to over-generalize and over-dramatize this [Afghan] period of Kashmir history.” She concludes that “Lawrence conveys more what was remembered than what occurred.” The Pandits, in fact, wielded much influence with the Afghan rulers and even caused removal of governors. Thus, we see Kailas Dar and Babu Ram Pandit going to Kabul to meet Ahmad Shah Abdali and winning the ouster of Governor Nooruddin Khan in 1765 AD.¹⁰¹ When the tolerant and sympathetic Governor Atta Mohammad Khan, revolting against the rule of the Afghans, declared independence and ensured participation of Kashmiri Muslims in the administration, a group of Kashmiri Pandits went to Kabul to seek his removal and succeeded in the dispatch of a strong army contingent that unseated the rebellious governor.¹⁰² Likewise, Governor Abdullah Khan was not only recalled to Kabul but also imprisoned there at the behest of Pandit Nand Ram.¹⁰³ The loyalty of Kashmiri Pandits towards the Afghans could perhaps be appreciated by the comment of a later day Pandit ‘historian’ who dubs a local *jagirdar* rebelling against the Afghans as a ‘traitor’.¹⁰⁴

As Afghan rule over Kashmir began crumbling, a group of Kashmiri Pandits led by Birbal Dhar was already conspiring and looking towards

the Sikh throne in Lahore for fettering Kashmir in yet another phase of slavery that proved to be the worst of all till then in terms of repression of local population. Dhar, now being no more on the same page with the penultimate Afghan Governor Azim Khan, clandestinely reached Lahore along with his son, Raja Kak Dhar, with the help of the ruler of Jammu, Gulab Singh. There, he invited Ranjit Singh to attack and conquer Kashmir. The Sikh ruler was reluctant as he had suffered major reverses in an earlier attempt but an eloquent Dhar was successful in persuading him to send his 30,000 strong army with him for capturing Kashmir. "On 20th June 1819 AD, Pandit Birbal Dhar and his valiant band of the Pandits along with the Sikh army made a triumphant entry into the city of Srinagar,"¹⁰⁵ is how Jia Lal Kilam describes the onset of one of the most barbaric dispensations suffered by Kashmiri Muslims. Kilam's contemporary, Gwasha Lal Koul describes Birbal Dhar as a "sagacious Pandit [who] promised them [Sikhs] success."¹⁰⁶ Mirza Saifuddin, author of *Khulasat-ul-Tawareekh*,¹⁰⁷ writes about Birbal Dhar:

Administrative and financial matters were vested with Pandit Dhar. Since Pandit nursed personal grudge and animosity against Kashmir's elite and prominent citizens he ordered, without the knowledge of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, forfeiture of the few land grants that had survived seizure by the Mughals and the Afghans. Prayers at the Jama Masjid were forbidden on the pretext that congregation would endanger peace. Cow slaughter was stringently banned and punished with death and confiscation of property. The non-Muslims [read Kashmiri Pandits] were granted land holdings, employment in government and administrative assignments. Muslims who held positions during the Afghan rule were ousted. In the first year of the government, land holders were asked to provide 18,000 kharwar of paddy to the *Dharmarth*. Due to this, their condition became precarious and they were forced to migrate from Kashmir. People associated with them or their relatives became destitute. About 10,000 families were impoverished. Countless people were put to death on allegations of cow slaughter. Some of them were burnt alive. All government, state and financial matters were taken over by the Hindus and the Muslims were rendered a paralysed limb.¹⁰⁸

One of the Kashmiri Pandits who took part in the capture of Kashmir by Sikhs was Lal Koul, who later headed the Rawalpindi Brigade of the Sikh army and then rose to the position of the governor of Multan.¹⁰⁹ Another Pandit, Amar Nath, served like a poet laureate in Ranjit Singh's *darbar* and composed *Fateh Nama* commemorating the victory of the Sikhs over the Afghans at Peshawar.¹¹⁰ Some Pandits such as Lal Koul and Ajhodhia Prasad serving the Sikh army as commanders were simultaneously also in touch with the East India Company and were substantially rewarded by the latter following the Anglo-Sikh War of 1845–46 in which the Sikhs were defeated.¹¹¹ Prasad, commander of Ranjit Singh's special army, in fact, extolled "the kindness and the greatness of the British to let the Sikh ruler preserve his kingdom despite complete victory and breach of treaty by the Sikhs."¹¹² Prasad's father, Ganga Ram, had earlier brought many Pandits to the Lahore *Darbar*. After the death of Lal Koul, Walter Lawrence brought up his only son, Suraj Koul, and had him trained in a career in the political department. Following the victory of the British in the Indian Rebellion of 1857 and establishment of direct control of the British Crown over India, the Kashmiri Pandits who had settled in the plains and whose relations were with indigenous rulers shifted their loyalty to the new rulers. An idea of the fortunes of the Pandits of the period can be made from the comment of Bishen Narain Dar that "even the stones in Kashmiri Mohalla could boast they had an uncle who is a Deputy Collector."¹¹³ Sender draws a picture of the continuity in the fortune of these families:

The continuity in the fortunes of the Pandits previous to and immediately following the events of 1857 is striking. Those who were in prominent positions emerged with their standing generally intact or enhanced. It is not clear whether the Kashmiris were actually loyal to the British cause or whether they merely appeared to be so. The weight of evidence favours the former interpretation. The pattern of evident loyalty was almost uniform despite regional diversity and past history. Members of the oldest families in the plains, whose relations with indigenous rulers were of long standing, chose to support the British as well as those individuals whose fate was more recently and clearly tied to the newcomers.... The alacrity with

which the old order was abandoned suggests opportunism.... In the princely states, the Pandits either disassociated themselves from rebellious chiefs or identified with those who were allies of the British.... While the Muslims of old Delhi were composing *shahr ashobs* mourning the passage of easier times and better days, Pandits were too busy either acquiring the confiscated property of Muslim aristocrats or departing from Delhi for the new centres of political life in north India.... The [Pandit-British] relationship was a mutually profitable one. The British were in need of indigenous collaborators to carry out the systematization of administration; collaborators responsive to them rather than native authorities.... The history of the Haksar family best illustrates the deepening ties between the Kashmiris and the British.... Prem Narain [Haksar] assisted English officers who fled Lalitpur and took refuge in Tehri. 'For his service [he] received marks of approbation of the Governor-General of India such as are seldom bestowed on a private individual.'¹¹⁴

Returning to Kashmir, the 27 years of the Sikh rule are marked by naked aggression—physical, economic and religious—on Muslims. Their mosques were locked or turned into stables and granaries and *azan* was banned.¹¹⁵ The Jama Masjid was closed down for 23 years.¹¹⁶ One of the meanest Sikh army generals, Phoola Singh, positioned a cannon on the other side of the river bank to blast the Khanqah-i-Mualla,¹¹⁷ the most revered Muslim shrine in the old city of Srinagar. However, at the last hour, he was advised by Birbal Dhar against doing so for the fear of serious breach of peace. Marriages and divorces were taxed and for every marriage other than the tax levied by the government, a *patwari* who, as a rule had to be Kashmiri Pandit, would charge an *anna* as *Rasm-e-Patwari*.¹¹⁸ William Moorcroft sums up the pathetic situation thus:

Everywhere, however, the people are in the most abject condition; exorbitantly taxed by the Sikh government, and subjected to every kind of extortion and oppression by its officers. The consequences of this system are, the gradual depopulation of the country: not more than one-sixteenth of the cultivable surface is in cultivation, and the inhabitants starving at home, are driven in great numbers to the Plains of Hindustan.¹¹⁹

The Sikh governors were cruel. One of them told Jacquemont, a French traveller who visited Kashmir in 1831, that in the first year of his governorship he had hanged two hundred Kashmiris only to frighten all the others. He boasted that the people were now so scared that it was only necessary to hang one or two here and there to keep peace.¹²⁰ The Muslims were economically strangulated and the condition of people in the country was so poor that water-nuts formed almost the only food of at least 30,000 persons for five months in a year.¹²¹ The lotus stems sustained five thousand persons in the city of Srinagar alone for eight months.¹²² Houses in the country were in a ruinous condition, with broken doors or no doors at all.¹²³ They presented the "wretched contrast with their once gay and happy condition, and [spoke] of volumes, upon the light and joyous prosperity that [had] long fled the country, on account of the shameless rapacity of the ruthless Sikhs."¹²⁴ Every shawl was taxed 26 per cent upon the estimated value.¹²⁵ On a petition of the Kashmiri Pandits, the slaughter of cow was banned and held a death penalty. Many Muslims were mercilessly killed for slaughtering a domestic animal to fight starvation. During the governorship of Diwan Chuni Lal (1825–27 AD), three prominent Muslim businessmen of Kawaosa family in Srinagar were hanged and their bodies dragged in the streets on false charges of cow slaughter for beef.¹²⁶ Likewise, 12 members of a family in Hawal and 17 members of another family in Chhatabal were burnt alive on charges of cow slaughter.¹²⁷ In yet another gruesome incident, Sujan Singh, an official under the penultimate governor of the Sikh rule, burnt alive 19 members of a boatman family living on the Doodhganga stream on bogus charges of killing a cow.¹²⁸ The dead included women and children.

Such being brutal conditions the Muslims were living in, the Pandits enjoyed fruits of power and patronage of the Lahore *Darbar*. Ranjit Singh was so happy with the Dhars that Raja Kak was awarded robe of honour and cash payment while his father and the man behind bringing Sikh misrule to Kashmir, Birbal Dhar, was made the principal advisor and chief revenue collector,¹²⁹ an institution that in subsequent years was to break, through exactions, the backbone of the Muslim peasantry. Although there was a governor in office to administer Kashmir, Birbal Dhar was actually exercising the authority.¹³⁰ The

rise of Dhar family, known for its scheming role in Kashmir politics, relates to this inauspicious period. That their influence has not been beneficial for Kashmir is borne out by these adages: *Dhar na bayad guzaasht be zanjeer* (The Dhars like doors should be locked up) and *Dhar aabat Kashir barbaad* (Prosperity of the Dhars is ruinous to Kashmir).

The fall of the Sikhs, following their defeat by the British, also ended their tyrannical rule in Kashmir, only to be replaced by a more callous Dogra regime in 1846 AD. The foundation of this regime was laid in the most obnoxious, illegal and foul manner that human history has ever known. An entire country along with its people and resources was sold for 7.5 million rupees by the British Empire, the so-called Mother of Democracy, “[to] the absolute power of one of the meanest, most avaricious, cruel and unprincipled of men that ever sat upon a throne.”¹³¹ Writing about this obnoxious deal, Vigne observes: “As Kashmir contains six hundred thousand inhabitants, they were estimated at twenty-five shillings a head, the most extensive transaction in the slave trade of modern times.”¹³²

The next hundred years of this tyrannical regime is a long story of pain, suffering and misery of the Kashmiri Muslims, the account of which melts even the hardest of hearts. Gulab Singh, the founder of the Dogra rule in Kashmir, deprived the Muslims of all proprietary rights of lands declaring that since he had purchased the country he was its sole owner and agriculturists; tillers and zamindars were only tenants-at-will.¹³³ They were treated worse than animals and used as beasts of burden. The last of the Dogra rulers, Hari Singh, was considered somewhat ‘emancipated’ in comparison to his predecessors, but his ‘emancipation’ was displayed when he resented his Prime Minister, Raja Maharaj Singh’s wife donating blood to a poor suffering Kashmiri village girl who was in dire need of blood transfusion.¹³⁴ Singh sent a word to the prime minister that he and his wife should not mix too much with common people. In response, Maharaj Singh resigned and immediately left the state.

The account of foreign travellers who came to Kashmir during the Dogra rule allows a peep into the cruelties the rulers inflicted on the masses. One can have a fair view of the then prevailing situation from the following statement of a contemporary Christian missionary:

In Kashmir you find heaven and hell just near each other. While the land is famous for its natural beauty, the poverty and misery of its people is a disgrace to humanity. When we see the downtrodden, poor, weak, ailing, and hunger stricken people of Kashmir in rags and dirty clothes, feeling of compassion and kindness come to our heart. They are all Muslims drowned in misery.¹³⁵

Gulab Singh went beyond his predecessors in the acts of undue taxation, extortion and oppression. In the words of Torrens:

They had taxed heavily it is true, but he sucked the very life blood of the people. They had laid violent hands on a large proportion of the fruits of the earth, the profits of the loom and the work of men's hands, but he skinned the very flints to fill his coffers.¹³⁶

Vigne narrates an incident revealing the brutal character of Gulab Singh:

An insurrection had taken place against the authority of Gulab Singh, which he succeeded in suppressing. Some of his prisoners were flayed alive under his own eye. The executioner hesitated, and Gulab asked him if he were about to operate on his own father or mother. He then ordered one or two of the skins to be stashed with straw, the hands were stiffened and tied in an attitude of supplication. The corpse was then placed erect, and the head, which had been severed from the body, was reversed as it rested on the neck. The figure was then planted on the wayside, that passersby might see it; and Gulab Singh called his son's attention to it, and told him to take a lesson in the art of governing. The heads of two of the prisoners I saw grinning from iron cages over the path at Ada Tak, by way of affording a wholesome lesson, to all travellers.¹³⁷

All this while, Kashmiri Pandits were comfortably placed and members of the community continued to work as the arm of repression for heartless rulers. The most oppressive institution of *begar* was the worst manifestation of the Dogra regime with an unspecified number of able-bodied Muslims, serving as beasts of burden, being devoured by

inhospitable mountain routes, only to be feasted upon by vultures and wild animals. The officials responsible for drafting these unfortunate men for *begar* came from the Pandit community. The forced labour broke the back of Muslim peasantry in Kashmir as non-Muslims were exempted from forced labour. Muslim cultivators working on the lands of Kashmiri Pandits, Sikhs and Dharmarth department were exempted from corvee.¹³⁸ The Pandit revenue officials through whom the requisition was channelled were callous in seizing peasants for *begar*. They also used this oppressive practice to fatten their pockets. Against a requirement of, say, ten coolies, the number was doubled by every official to whom the requisition was forwarded till the *tehsildar* seized 80 coolies from villages under his jurisdiction.¹³⁹ This was done to extract bribe from 70 other coolies who would pay ₹70 to ₹90 per head in order to purchase their exemption.¹⁴⁰ The revenue officials more often than not used this opportunity to acquire the occupancy rights of the Kashmiri agriculturalists, and the sum paid for such 'purchases' to state officials was more than made up by extortion from cultivators.¹⁴¹ Villages were also forced to regularly pay taxes in kind from village produce such as wood, milk and blankets. Lawrence roughly calculated ₹1,300 per annum paid by one village to the state including payment to the Dharmarth Trust fund and an additional ₹410 to Pandit officials.¹⁴²

The powerless peasants were seized for *begar* when they used to be busy with their farming operations. The author of the *Travels in India and Kashmir* narrates the plight of the Muslim peasantry in the following words:

I have been in many lands, but nowhere did the human being present a more saddening spectacle than in Kashmir. It vividly recalled the history of the Israelites under the Egyptian (Pharaoh's) rule, when they were flogged at their daily labour by their pitiless task-masters. And here the same picture presents itself: man raises his hand against his fellow-men, and for no other object than to excite physical pain. This troop of forty peasants were called together by a beadle, and driven along like a herd of cattle, the keeper walking behind, and striking all within his reach. This slave driver carried a peculiar kind of whip, woven after the fashion of the Russian knot, a little more pliant, and about a foot and a half in length. There were three or four

thongs, each having a knot on the end. The handle was about a foot and a half long. The beadle carries the whip in his girdle and when the opportunity occurs uses it as a driver of cattle does his good; and indeed I ought to say, that he makes opportunities rather than awaits them.¹⁴³

During the Dogra rule, the forced labour took a more perilous turn for Muslim subjects as the administration herded them to take supplies for its armies engaged in military expeditions in far off Gilgit, Leh, Chilas, Askardu and Hazara through rough terrain, snowy passes, dangerous and winding arid mountain paths from where not all would return alive. Mohammad Yusuf Saraf observes that outside Srinagar city, there is hardly a family in Kashmir in which the tragic disappearance of some male relation employed on *begar* has not descended as a tragic part of the family chronicle from generation to generation.¹⁴⁴ It was impossible for a person to hide when the rapacious officials were on lookout for human carriage for these hazardous destinations. What befell these poor creatures is thus summed up by E. F. Knight:

They fall on the road to perish of hunger and thirst, and, thinly clad as they are, are destroyed in hundreds at a time by the cold on the snowy passes. When a man is seized for this form of Begar, his wife and children hang upon him, weeping, taking it almost for granted that they will never see him again. A gang of these poor creatures, heavily laden with grain toiling along the desert crags between Astor and Gilgit, on a burning summer's day, urged on by a sepoy guard, is perhaps as pitiable a spectacle as any to be seen on the roads of Siberia. But these are not convicts and criminals; they are Mussulman farmers, harmless subjects of Maharaja.¹⁴⁵

Muhammad Siddiq Parray who lived through the reign of Pratap Singh and Hari Singh, the last two Dogra rulers, recounts the horrifying situation the Muslim subjects were living in:

Those were very bad times. The administration, both police and civil, comprised only Dogras and Kashmiri Pandits. People were deprived of all rights and liberty and the Muslim subjects lived a life of abject dispossession. The administration was ruthless.

One would tremble to even think of the tyranny that people would go through. The farmers had to part with most of their produce that was forcibly taken by the officials. There was this infamous and inhuman institution of *begar* (forced labour) which ran chill through the spines of the people. They were scared of Maharaja's soldiers and avoided walking on roads lest they were spotted by the sepoys and taken for labour. Women were molested by *Shakdars* in the name of body search pretending to ascertain that they had not stolen fruit from the fields they were employed in for de-weeding. The officials of revenue and police administration like *Tehsildar* and down below and policemen were also the institutions of repression and dreaded by the people. I recall one policeman, Nil Kanth of Puhroo village, nicknamed as Nil Puhroo, who was posted at Munshi Bagh police *chowki* under whose jurisdiction our area fell. He was a terrible man who caught people and sent them on *begar*. People would put huge stone mortars against their doors and remain indoors when they heard this cruel policeman was nearby. Such was the fear he had created among the population. I remember two men of our locality, Mukhta Mir and Khaliq Mir who were sent on *begar* to Ladkah, a treacherous journey from which not many returned. Razak Rather of Bonamsar, Sonawar was among such ill-fated people who perished en-route. When a person was taken on *begar*, the entire village would come out and weep for him as he would most probably not return alive. The revenue officials who would enlist people for *begar* beat drums and play music to drown the [noise of] chest-beating and wailing of women and, sort of, boost the morale of those being dispatched on *begar*.¹⁴⁶

The terrible part of the *begar* was that the poor peasant-labourers who survived the vagaries of weather and harshness of the terrain and reached Gilgit were sold as slaves to the 'wild inhabitants' of that inhospitable region or exchanged for some animals.¹⁴⁷ Tyndale Biscoe mentions grandfather of one of his servants who was exchanged with a Chinese dog.¹⁴⁸ The dread of *begar* was so rampant and widespread that Muslims in 'large numbers migrated to neighbouring Punjab and other places outside Kashmir to escape the torment and tribulation associated with *begar*. The enormity of migration was such that in 1891 AD, the Punjab Census Report enumerated about 111,775

Muslims born in Kashmir as having settled in the Punjab.¹⁴⁹ This was equivalent to the then entire population (118,960) of Srinagar.¹⁵⁰ The institution of *begar* continued for about 30 years after this and one can imagine how many more tens of thousands of Muslims must have crossed the mountains to escape oppression in Kashmir. Besides oppression that the Kashmiri Muslims suffered at the hands of their Hindu rulers, a series of natural calamities during this period took a heavy toll of their lives. In the famine of 1831 AD, the population of the Valley was reduced from 800,000 to 200,000.¹⁵¹ Another famine struck Kashmir in 1878 AD killed three-fifths of the population.¹⁵² Swarms of starving Muslim peasants attempted to escape to the Punjab but were prevented by troops on the border. Lawrence recalls that “harrowing tales are told of fathers of families getting past the barrier by bribing the guardians of the passes while the wives and children were left to die in Kashmir.”¹⁵³ Against this scenario, the Kashmiri Pandits did not feel the pressure of scarcity to migrate. “It is a notorious fact that the Hindus of Kashmir did not suffer heavily,” for “they were a privileged class, whose official power enabled them to seize all available grain.”¹⁵⁴

Maharaja Ranbir Singh significantly enhanced the position of privilege held by Kashmiri Pandits for long, gave them enormous authority and encouraged them to traffic in land. The Dogras provided them with a stake in supporting their rule. Consequently, the Pandit revenue officials, besides dealing ruthlessly with Muslim peasantry through the institution of *begar* and taxation, also usurped their land. Walter Lawrence presents a shocking picture of the loot of villages and divesting Muslim peasants of their land:

When I commenced work in Kashmir I came across numerous instances of this kind of *begar* and in one tehsil I found that three villages had been sold to a recent *Hakim-i-Ala* for very trivial amounts, giving an average of about Rs. 40 per village.... Many other villages were similarly sold, all for nominal sums, the real consideration being that the villages were to be freed from *begar*. In one instance a *tehsildar* bought a fine village for Rs. 130, but did not even go through the form of paying this sum, but excused the villagers Rs. 130 from their revenue and entered it as an arrear.¹⁵⁵

The *chakdari* system was turned into a vicious mechanism to acquire control over extensive tracts of land and regularly flouted rules governing the system. Following the great famine of 1877–79, when lands fell fallow, they took over vast expanses of land claiming these to be uncultivated waste. Muslim cultivators, who in large numbers had temporarily shifted to Punjab to escape starvation, upon their return found that they had been ousted from lands they had cultivated over generations.¹⁵⁶ The Pandit officials schemed with their co-religionists in the consolidation of large landed estates in the valley. Mridu Rai describes the situation thus:

The Pandits devised numerous ingenious strategies for an almost 'annual' accretion of lands to their chaks. The help of the local tehsildar was frequently summoned by the chakdar for the acquisition of cultivated lands adjoining his assignment. Common machinations included the threat of raising revenue demand or instigating imaginary boundary disputes to compel cultivators to abandon their lands, which were then 'legitimately' transferred to the chakdari. The moment the durbar announced the desirability of resettling these 'waste or semi-waste villages ... by leasing them out on easy terms', the Pandit revenue officials 'would have possession of a valuable patronage'. The assessment was low since it was made on the land considered waste, and the cultivators ... waiting in surrounding villages' would be allowed to come back on terms favourable to the chakdar. The Kashmiri Pandit thereby made large profits *visa-a-vis* both the State and the cultivators.¹⁵⁷

Tyndale Biscoe gives an idea of the exploitation of the Muslim majority of Kashmir at the hands of the Pandit officials. He writes:

Those Brahman bundles [Pandit students of the Mission School where Biscoe was the Principal] in the school were the sons or grandsons of those officials who had bullied and squeezed the Mohammedan peasants for years past, and their large houses in the city, with all their wealth, were a standing witness to their looting powers, for the salary they received from the State was quite insignificant. Now their parents had sent them to school, so that they might get State employment and follow in the steps of their forefathers, and by aid of their English education they

might even go one better than their progenitors. Now how was one to combat this? By teaching them to hate wrong and love right, to hate oppression and love to protect the weak, in fact to be the exact opposite to their fathers.¹⁵⁸

As observed earlier, Birbal Dhar had established contact with Gulab Singh to bring about Sikh invasion and occupation of Kashmir. His closeness with the Dogras was rewarded¹⁵⁹ by them with the appointment of his son, Raja Kak Dhar, as head of the Dagh Shawl Department in Kashmir. The junior Dhar imposed heavy taxes on poor shawl weavers and enjoyed government patronage and army assistance on his tax collection rounds. He made good use of this official support and literally skinned poor Muslim workers. It was courtesy of his ruthless oppression that the hand-to-mouth-living shawl industry workers rose in agitation in Srinagar in 1865 AD, 21 years before the world's first celebrated labour agitation at Wisconsin, USA. On the instigation of Dhar, the agitation was ruthlessly crushed by Dogra army using brute force that led to drowning of dozens of agitators in the Keta Kol, an outflow channel of Jhelum near Zaldagar in downtown Srinagar. As many as 28 bodies were "returned to the people by the army."¹⁶⁰ Leaders of the uprising including Ubli Baba, Sheikh Rasool, Qudda Lala and Sona Bhat were arrested, severely tortured and thrown into a dungeon. Two of them died of torture while the remaining two were excommunicated and imprisoned in the Bahu Fort, Jammu.¹⁶¹ In 1924, when Muslim workers in the State-owned silk factory demanded an increase in wages and transfer of a corrupt Hindu clerk, some of their leaders were arrested. "Military was sent for and most inhuman treatment was meted out to the poor, hapless, unarmed peace-loving labourers who were assaulted with spears, lances and other implements of warfare."¹⁶²

The administration was overwhelmingly dominated by the Pandits despite the fact that Muslims constituted 95 per cent of the total population of Kashmir and practically paid all the revenue and other taxes. All high and low posts in civil administration were usurped by the Hindus of the State as well as outsiders.¹⁶³ Every village had a number of government agents of repression and extortion who, as a matter of rule, were Kashmiri Pandits. These included *patwari*, *shakdar*, *sargoal*, *tarakardar* and *barkara*. Lawrence talks about 'few good and active

officials' in the revenue administration of Kashmir "but these men, whose names are still well remembered and respected in the valley, were not of the Pandit class."¹⁶⁴ The peculation and oppression in Kashmir, he recalls, had been common earlier too, "but peculation was placed on a safe and intelligent basis when the administration was practically vested in the hands of the Pandits of Kashmir."¹⁶⁵

An overwhelming proportion of everything produced from the soil was taken away by these rapacious officials in the name of taxes and exactions. There was nothing left in the country without being taxed—fruit, cattle, ghee, fowl, honey, you name it—and the officials showed no mercy in collection of taxes. To ensure that no one in the villages pounded his paddy, the stone mortars were filled with mud and sealed till the shares of these officials and that of the ruler was extorted from the poor farmers.¹⁶⁶ The greed of these 'corrupt and insatiable harpies' was as enormous as their opposition to any monitoring of their activities. The following extract from E. F. Knight's book, *Where Three Empires Meet*, sums it up:

The only class that does object—and with good reason—to our supervision of the affairs of the state during the present critical time is that small body of Hindoos from which the officials are selected—corrupt even for Oriental officials—who grind down the unfortunate Mussulman peasantry with their outrageous rapacity and with the forced labour which they exact. These do not at all relish our newly introduced revenue reforms, which, while they enrich the treasury and bring a secure prosperity to the people, deprive these ruffianly pundits of their lot.¹⁶⁷

The revenue administration from *patwari* to *naib-tehsildar* to *tehsildar* to *wazir-i-wazarat* to *hakim-i-a'ala* was an all-Pandit affair.¹⁶⁸ While Lawrence finds it "only natural" to have the administration filled with members of the minority community who "can read and write with ease," he observes that

[I]t is to be regretted that the interests of the State and of the people should have been entrusted to one class of men, and still more to be regretted that these men, the Pandits, should have systematically combined to defraud the State and to rob the people.¹⁶⁹

He talks about ‘a powerful ring of iron’ created by the Pandit officials who are loyal to one another and each one knew “when awkward questions are asked he has friends at the tehsil, at the head-quarters of the *wazir wazarat*, and in the *Daftar-i-Diwani*.¹⁷⁰ Every post in the valley was made “a source of perquisites” and worked as “curse and misfortune to the Musalmans of Kashmir.”¹⁷¹ The power of acting, flattery and patience of these officials to gain their ends and thereby dupe others has been recorded by many a European visitor and official who came to Kashmir in the 19th and the early 20th century AD. Noted educationist, Tyndale Biscoe, for one, had seen many Europeans fall before it, and through flattering these people becoming personal confidants of their masters “to the detriment of any honest men in their department.”¹⁷²

For mincing their Muslim subjects, the Pandit officials served as grinding slabs for the Dogra rulers. Knight uses an uncharitable word, ‘despicable’, to describe them and expresses surprise over their calling themselves as *Pundits* [Pandits] “for it is an utter misuse of that term, which is supposed to imply learning, a quality very scarce among these people.”¹⁷³ Many pejorative proverbs of Kashmiri language such as *Bata kaar gata kaar* (Pandit’s work is dark work), *Bata yaar berozgar* (A Pandit is your friend only when out of employment), *Kani wasya posa Bata bani doas* (Finding a friend in a Pandit is as impossible as skinning a rock) and *Bata chhu grata* (The Pandit is like a grinding mill) are indicative of the Pandit officials’ harmful influence on the masses. As we have observed, the Pandits held all the low and high positions in the administration and closely guarded the avenues of employment. The very word Pandit became synonymous with *mahrah* (short form of maharaja) by which Muslims in Kashmir addressed them.¹⁷⁴ However, in the early 20th century, they were confronted with a situation of sharing administrative positions with the Hindu officers coming from the Punjab. They stridently resisted employment of non-State subjects in government offices and in 1927 forced the Dogra ruler to enact the State Subject Law. The new law closed employment avenues for non-State subjects. During this period, the Pandits also sought and received support of the British Government against their Hindu Maharaja. The British officers in Kashmir encouraged them and even sided with them.¹⁷⁵ “The Pandits

were enlisted in very large numbers in all the departments, headed by British officers.”¹⁷⁶ The Residency also backed up the demand¹⁷⁷ of the Pandits to shut the door of recruitment on non-State subjects who were predominantly Hindus from the Punjab. This even when the Dogra rulers accorded special treatment to the Kashmiri Pandits in every area including trusting members of the community such as Hari Kishen Koul and Ram Chandra Kak with the highest position of the Prime Minister. Earlier, towards the end of the 18th century, we find a Kashmiri Pandit, Ganga Ram, serving the Scindias, the rulers of Gwalior in central India, promising Governor General Warren Hastings, never to oppose the English and when the Scindias began their campaign against the British, he left the service and shifted to Delhi where the British looked with favour upon him.¹⁷⁸

On top of a corrupt and brutal administration that Muslims had to suffer at the hands of their compatriots, they were also subjected to the worst kind of religious prejudice. While a Muslim would eat and drink without scruple from the hands of a Hindu, no Hindu would ever accept food or water from a Muslim.¹⁷⁹ Mosques were confiscated and used as storehouses for grains and arms, and as stables. Conversion to Islam was banned and any Hindu who embraced Islam was imprisoned, tortured and deprived of all his movable and immovable property. Preaching of Islam was prohibited, while Hindus had freedom to preach their tenets and popularize the *shudi* movement.¹⁸⁰ During the rule of Pratap Singh, whose contempt for Muslims was monumental, the Kashmiri Pandits were so emboldened that they attacked and desecrated the Khanqah-i-Mualla and broke its doors and windows.¹⁸¹ Pratap Singh was full of vengeance against the majority community, so much that he would not bear the sight of a Muslim in the morning after he rose from bed.¹⁸² He had also banned burial of Muslims in the graveyard at Sonawar just because he did not want a funeral procession pass his way.¹⁸³ No Muslim in the valley was allowed to carry a firearm nor allowed in the army.¹⁸⁴ The repression and exploitation suffered by Kashmiri Muslims was so enormous that, in the words of Tyndale Biscoe, if the Britishers had to undergo this “[they] might have lost [their] manhood.”¹⁸⁵

Measures for educational uplift of Muslims were absent or scarce. They “did not send their sons to school as all government service

was closed to them.”¹⁸⁶ Students from the community who were interested were discouraged from joining schools. Hurdles were placed in their way by non-Muslim (read Pandit) teachers in different ways so that they would drop out from schools early.¹⁸⁷ Educational institutions were run largely for the benefit of Hindus and other non-Muslim communities.¹⁸⁸ For an overwhelmingly Muslim majority State, there were only 718 Muslim teachers out of a total number of 2,201, only three Muslim headmasters of middle schools out of 49 and one in 14 high schools had a Muslim Headmaster.¹⁸⁹ The abject situation was summed up by Muslims in a representation made to the Viceroy of India, Lord Reading, who visited Srinagar in 1924. The representation reads:

The Mussulmans of Kashmir are in a miserable plight today. Their education needs are woefully neglected. Though forming 96 per cent of the population, the percentage of literacy amongst them is only 0.8 per cent.... So far we have patiently borne the State's indifference towards our grievances and our claims and its high-handedness towards our rights, but patience has its limit and resignation its end ... the Hindus of the state, forming merely 4 per cent of the whole population are the undisputed masters of all departments.¹⁹⁰

In 1899, the *Mirwaiz* of Kashmir, Molvi Rasool Shah, established a school in Srinagar. The institution set up under the aegis of the *Nusrat ul Islam* was later upgraded to a high school and it subsequently branched out as a chain of schools. The Islamia School, as it came to be known, was successful in generating awareness among the community members about the importance of education for their children. By the end of the Dogra rule in 1947, the literacy rate among Muslims had appreciably risen. New crops of the community youth graduating from educational institutions, especially the Aligarh Muslim University, began competing for government jobs that, however, continued to remain an almost exclusive prerogative of the Pandits. The few Muslims who somehow managed entry into government departments suffered religious prejudice which did not spare even persons like Ghulam Ahmad Mehjoor, popularly known as the Poet of Kashmir. Mehjoor, whose verses of love and communal harmony

had made him a living legend, worked in the revenue department. He was frustrated and made an unsuccessful representation to higher authorities complaining about continued denial of promotion to him by non-Muslim officers despite being qualified. He pointed out that his less deserving Pandit colleagues of the same rank had risen to higher positions. Mehjoor joined the revenue department as a *patwari* and remained so throughout his service career. In his representation to the higher authorities, he referred to many of his equally placed Kashmiri Pandit *patwaris* who were elevated to higher positions leaving him out despite being 'superior to them in knowledge, performance, experience and writing skills'. "Since from *Girdawar* and *Qanoongo* to the Settlement Officer, all officers are Hindus I could not get a promotion," he complained.¹⁹¹

The steady advancement of Muslims in the field of education was viewed by Kashmiri Pandits with grudge and opposition, for in this they foresaw collapse of their hegemony over government jobs and administrative positions. As more and more qualified Muslims competed for government jobs and began to secure these on merit, although in small measure than they deserved, apprehensions of the Pandits also soared. They either directly opposed recruitment of Muslims in government departments or on different pretexts started agitations at whose core was the fear of the community losing its preponderance over State services. The *Roti Agitation* of 1932 started by the Pandits after the Maharaja's government conceded the grievance of Muslims that the doors of government services were closed on them, or the social strife caused over the conversion and marriage of a Pandit girl in 1967 were in fact directed against the movement of Kashmiri Muslims on the road to education and their consequent claim over vacancies in government departments. On both occasions, pressure was built on the government of the day by communalizing the situation to subvert legitimate employment opportunities for Muslims. In 1967, as also in 1986, the Pandits attempted blackmail by threatening mass migration from Kashmir because of, what they alleged, 'dwindling opportunities of employment'. In the opening of a little window of employment for qualified Muslims, the Tota Kouls¹⁹² among the Pandits had seen a serious challenge to their 'indispensability' for government services.

Notes and References

1. In 1931, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah emerged as the leader of Kashmiri Muslims against the Dogra occupation of Kashmir. Along with others, he formed the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and became its President. Subsequently in 1939, he converted it into the National Conference, a secular and pro-India political party. After the termination of the Dogra rule in 1947, Abdullah was first made emergency administrator of Jammu and Kashmir and, later, prime minister. In 1953, his close friendship with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was strained due to which he was unceremoniously sacked on 9 August 1953 and imprisoned for 11 years. In 1964, he was released only to be exonerated for four and a half year in two spells. Finally, he mended fences with Nehru's daughter and the then prime minister of India, Indira Gandhi, following which he was returned to power in 1975 which he held till his death on 8 September 1982. His autobiography, *Aatash-e-Chinar*, was released in 1986, four years after his demise.
2. Abdullah, *Aatash-e-Chinar*, 637–53.
3. Ibid., 649; Vishnu is known as *Parmeshwar*, the supreme god in the *Vaishnavite* tradition of Hindus.
4. Rai, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects*, 9.
5. *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book VI, verses 107, 195; Book VII, verses 103, 461, 1380. Sultan Sikandar had banned *suttee* in Kashmir. However, his son, Zainul Aabideen is said to have lifted the ban.
6. Saifuddin, *Khulasat-ul-Tawareekh*, 115.
7. See interview of Manohar Nath Tickoo at http://www.kashmir-issue.com/images3/mn_tickoo.pdf. Manohar Nath Tickoo was a college teacher and head of the department of Education at the Government College, Anantnag.
8. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 300.
9. Ibid.
10. H. L. H. Private File No. 17 of 1918, State Archives Repository, Jammu.
11. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 258.
12. Ibid., 262.
13. Ibid., 261.
14. Ibid., 300.
15. Ibid., 303.
16. Ibid., 276.
17. Shamim, Shiv Narain Raina. *Safir-i-Kashmir*, March 1892.
18. In 1986, the present author with his friend, Javed Azar, had a long interview with Masoodi at the latter's Ganderbal residence in north Kashmir. The interview was held for a newly launched Urdu weekly, *Ishaet*, but the senior politician agreed only to speak off the record. He dwelt for hours on various matters including on Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah's then recently published autobiography, *Aatash-e-Chinar*, in which Masoodi is painted in black. The interview, as mutually agreed, was not published. The weekly disappeared after few months of regular publication.

19. Rai, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects*, 639; Kilam, *A History of Kashmiri Pandits*, 100.
20. Kilam, *A History of Kashmiri Pandits*, 53.
21. Ahmad, *Tabaqat-i-Akbari*, III: 655.
22. Koul, *The Kashmiri Pandit*, 49.
23. Sukha quoted by Kilam, *A History of Kashmiri Pandits*, 84–85.
24. Ahad, *Kashmir Rediscovered*, 127.
25. Islam is today a fast growing religion in the United States and Europe, presently the most hostile regions for Muslims, which should set at rest the propaganda that its spread depended on sword. (For the last 10 years, the number of Muslims has been increasing throughout the world, and today every fourth person is a Muslim. This number is expected to grow even more in the near future [Haroon, *The Rise of Islam*]).
26. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, vol. I, Book VII, Verse 1149. An old manuscript of Qur'an in the collection of the J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages in Srinagar calligraphed by Fateh Ullah Al-Kashmiri in 1237 AD corroborates the presence of Muslims in Kashmir much before the en masse conversion and formal ascendancy of Muslims to power in the 14th century AD.
27. Jia Lal Kilam quotes Jonaraja to assert: "But the Brahmins who were always jealous of sharing their privileges which in spite of various vicissitudes they went through they had largely preserved, did not favour his [Rinchana's] initiation into their fold" (*A History of Kashmiri Pandits*, 32).
28. Aima, Buddhism in Kashmir.
29. Kalhana, *Rajatarangini*, Book I, Verse 291.
30. Ibid., Verse 293.
31. Ibid., Verse 302, 303.
32. Ibid., 78. Kalhana attributes slaughtering of three crore women, along with their husbands, children and brothers, to Mihirakula which, however, appears to be poetic exaggeration for the incredible number of casualties.
33. Mukherji, B. K. "Historical Background of Kashmiri Pandits." *Weekly Submission* dated 17–23 August 1990. Originally published in the *Srinagar Times*.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, I: 43, fn. 289.
38. Sufi, *Kashir*, I: 44; The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism, http://www.sgilibrary.org/search_dict.php?id=1426
39. *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. http://www.britanica.com/EB_checked/topic/381928/Mihirakula
40. *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book I, p. 43, fn 289.
41. Ibid., Book I, Verse 306.
42. Ibid., Verse 307, 312–16.
43. Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 38.
44. Chatterji *Kashmir Shaivism*, Part I, 3; Sufi, *Kashir*, I: 71.

45. Mullah Mohsin Fani, *Dabistan-e-Mazahib*, quoted by Abdullah, *Aatash-e-Chinar*, 639.
46. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, Book I, fn 307. While the Calcutta and Paris editions of *Rajatarangini* contain this description of women folk of *Bhattas*, the Kashmir manuscripts do not have it.
47. Ksemendra, *Desopadesa*, 23, quoted by Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 89.
48. Ibid., 90.
49. Ibid.
50. Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 90.
51. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 189.
52. Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 87.
53. Ibid., 87–88.
54. Kalhana, *Rajatarangini*, Book VII, Verse 1149; Book VIII, Verses 885–87, 2264, 2762–64, 2782–84.
55. Bamzai, *A History of Kashmir*, 167–68.
56. Wani, *Islam in Kashmir*, 231.
57. Ibid., 36. Historians differ on the year of ascendency of Shah Mir to the throne. Malik Haider gives the year as 753 AH (1352 AC), Birbal Kachru as 743 AH (1342 AC) which is corroborated by Mohammad Azam Dedmari and Hassan Khoihami (Sufi, *Kashir*, I: 132). However, according to Mohibbul Hassan, author of *Kashmir under the Sultans*, the year was 1339 AD. Professor Mohammad Ashraf Wani also concurs with this. Pertinently, Kota Rani, whom Shah Mir succeeded, died in 1339 AD (Hassan, *Kashmir under the Sultans*, 45, quoting Jonaraja, 32).
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid., 57–58.
60. Ibid., 55.
61. Ibid., 59.
62. Kilam, *A History of Kashmiri Pandits*, 61–62.
63. Ibid., 58.
64. Ibid., 67–68.
65. Sender, *The Kashmiri Pandits: A Study of Cultural Choice in North India*, 26.
66. Ibid., 28.
67. Kilam, *A History of Kashmiri Pandits*, 100.
68. Ibid., 101.
69. Ibid., 97.
70. Ibid., 106.
71. Ibid., 107.
72. Ibid., 104.
73. Fauq, *Tarikh-i-Aqwam-i-Kashmir*, 61; Sender, *The Kashmiri Pandits: A Study of Cultural Choice in North India*, 38.
74. Ibid., 39.
75. Hussain, *The Wounded Paradise*, 224.
76. Kilam, *A History of Kashmiri Pandits*, 111, 117.
77. Sender, *The Kashmiri Pandits: A Study of Cultural Choice in North India*, 40.
78. Ibid.

79. Kilam, *A History of Kashmiri Pandits*, 117.
80. Ibid., 122–23.
81. Knowles, *A Dictionary of Kashmiri Proverbs and Sayings*, 50–51.
82. Sender, *The Kashmiri Pandits: A Study of Cultural Choice in North India*, 43–44.
83. Hussain, *The Wounded Paradise*, 71.
84. Kilam, *A History of Kashmiri Pandits*, 242.
85. Koul, *Kashmir then and Now (5000 BC to 1978 AD)*, 54.
86. Campbell, *Ethnology of India*; Kilam, *A History of Kashmiri Pandits*, 156.
87. Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict: India, Pakistan and the Unending War*, 4.
88. Sender, *The Kashmiri Pandits: A Study of Cultural Choice in North India*, 44.
89. Kachroo, *Majmoo-e-Tawarikh*, 493.
90. Ibid., 496.
91. Ibid.; Parimu, *A History of Muslim Rule in Kashmir (1320–1819)*, 369.
92. Kilam, *A History of Kashmiri Pandits*, 190.
93. Koul, *Kashmir then and Now (5000 BC to 1978 AD)*, 54.
94. Hussain, *The Wounded Paradise*, 71–72.
95. Ibid., 74.
96. Ibid. Azad Khan once amused himself by taking pot shots with his musket at the crowd which had gathered to watch him pass. He slit his doctor's stomach open when the latter failed to produce an instant cure for an eye disease.
97. Ibid., 77.
98. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 197. Lawrence refers to the governor as Asad Khan instead of Azad Khan. However, there was no Afghan governor in Kashmir by the name of Asad Khan while Azad Khan served as the 15th governor of Kashmir under the Afghans.
99. Kilam, *A History of Kashmiri Pandits*, 204.
100. Kachroo, *Majmoo-e-Tawareekh*, 503, also 506–07. Kachroo writes about bias exhibited by Governor Mir Hazar Khan against Shia Muslims and Hindus but does not mention any cruelty against Kashmiri Hindus. In his account of Kashmir under the Afghans, there is only one incident of arrest of few Hindu officials who were demoted and then drowned in water at Varmul (Baramulla; p. 510). The incident relates to Governor Mirza Khan Alkozi who had disobeyed the Kabul throne and was confronted with ouster when he decided to march to Baramulla to take on the advancing Afghan army. While at Baramulla, he seized few Hindu revenue officials, possibly apprehending they might side with the Afghan troops, and killed them by drowning.
101. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 162.
102. Abdullah, *Aatash-e-Chinar*, 644–45.
103. Kilam, *A History of Kashmiri Pandits*, 210.
104. Ibid., 163. Lal Mohammad Khan was *jagirdar* of Beru in central Kashmir.
105. Kilam, *A History of Kashmiri Pandits*, 234–35.
106. Koul, *Kashmir then and Now (5000 BC to 1972 AD)*, 56.
107. Mirza Saifuddin lived during the Dogra rule over Kashmir and penned *Khulasatu Tawareekh* in the year 1859 on the persuasion of Major Jhon Hatcher who was appointed Resident during the governorship of Wazir Pannu.

108. Saifuddin, *Khulasat-ul-Tawareekh*, 111–12.
109. Sender, *The Kashmiri Pandits: A Study of Cultural Choice in North India*, 67–68.
110. *Ibid.*, 74.
111. *Ibid.*, 74–75. Following the Indian Rebellion of 1857, the British Crown took direct control of India in the form of the British Raj.
112. *Ibid.*, 75.
113. Bishen Narain Dar. *Safir-i-Kashmir*, July 1891.
114. *Ibid.*, 92–98.
115. Sufi, *Kashir*, II: 726.
116. Koul, *Geography of the Jammu & Kashmir State*, 152.
117. Fauq, *Tarikh-i-Aqwam-i-Kashmir*, III: 16.
118. Khanday, A. R. *The Sikh Rule in Kashmir*, 33.
119. Moorcroft and Trebeck, *Travels*, 123–24.
120. Hussain, *The Wounded Paradise*, 84.
121. Moorcroft and Trebeck, *Travels*, 136.
122. *Ibid.*, 137.
123. *Ibid.*, 119.
124. Vigne, *Travels in Kashmir, Ladakh, Iskardo*, I: 357.
125. Koul, *Kashmir then and Now (5000 BC to 1978 AD)*, 57.
126. Khanday, *The Sikh Rule in Kashmir*, 87.
127. Khoihami, Hassan, *Tarikh-i-Hassan*, II: 786; Khanday, *The Sikh Rule in Kashmir*, 87–88.
128. Saifuddin, *Khulasat-ul-Tawareekh*, 126.
129. Khanday, *The Sikh Rule in Kashmir*.
130. Nazim, *Nigaristan-i-Kashmir*, 341.
131. Thorp, *Kashmir Misgovernement*, 17.
132. Vigne, *Letters from India and Kashmir*, 163.
133. *Ibid.*, 26.
134. Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, 172. Hari Singh's indifference to the plight of his subjects was also demonstrated by his act of extravagance of gifting four ponies that he purchased for \$30,000 to the British Squad of Polo for its participation in a match at the International Field, Meadow Brook in the United States, when the majority of his subjects was impoverished [*The New Yorker*, 27 May 1939, 89–90].
135. Statement of a Christian missionary published in *Itihad-i-Islam*, Lahore, 4 April 1924 quoted in Thorp, *Kashmir Misgovernement*, 35.
136. Lt. Col. Torrens quoted in Thorp, *Kashmir Misgovernement*, 22 fn.
137. Vigne, *Letters from India and Kashmir*, 162.
138. Other sections of Muslims exempted from *begar* were the *pirzadas* and *saiyyads*, besides shawl weavers who were source of revenue for the government and corruption for its officials.
139. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 412.
140. *Ibid.*, 413.
141. Note by Walter Lawrence on the 'Position of the Cultivating Classes in Kashmir'; Rai, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects*, 155.

142. Ibid.
143. Schonberg, *Travels in India and Kashmir*, vol. II, 73–74.
144. Saraf, *Kashmir's Fight for Freedom (1819–1946)*, vol. I, 273–74.
145. Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet*, 68–69.
146. *Kashmir Life*, “Maharaja Pratap Singh even Banned Burial of the Dead,” 30 March 2013. <http://www.kashmirlife.net/maharaja-pratap-singh-even-banned-burial-of-the-dead-issue-03-vol-05-61123/>; Paray passed away at the age of 106 on 21 March 2013.
147. Biscoe, *Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade*, 236.
148. Ibid.
149. *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 1909, J&K.
150. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 224. Out of the total population of Kashmir in 1891, Muslims accounted for 757, 433 (225).
151. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 213.
152. Ibid.
153. Ibid., 215.
154. Ibid., 214.
155. Ibid., 414.
156. Rai, *Hindu Rulers, Muslim Subjects*, 157.
157. Ibid., 158.
158. Biscoe, *Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade*, 268–69.
159. It is an irony of fate that Birbal Dhar, who was instrumental in pushing Kashmir into the slavery of the Sikhs and who enjoyed unlimited power and influence, had to ultimately die as their prisoner.
160. Ghulam Nabi Shah, *Wajeez-ul-Tawarikh*, 201 quoted by Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir (1931–1940)*, 79.
161. Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir (1931–1940)*, 79.
162. Schofield, *The Kashmir Conflict: India, Pakistan and the Unending War*, 16.
163. Thorp, *Kashmir Misgovernment*, 37.
164. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 400.
165. Ibid.
166. Thorp, *Kashmir Misgovernment*, 24 fn.
167. Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet*, 32–33.
168. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 400–01.
169. Ibid., 401.
170. Ibid.
171. Ibid.
172. Biscoe, *Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade*, 143.
173. Knight, *Where Three Empires Meet*, 21.
174. Abdullah, *Aatash-e-Chinar*, 645.
175. Kilam, *A History of Kashmiri Pandits*, 290.
176. Ibid.
177. Ibid.
178. Sender, *The Kashmiri Pandits: A Study of Cultural Choice in North India*, 59–60.
179. *Census of India*, 1901, I: 31.

180. Thorp, *Kashmir Misgovernment*, 37–39.
181. Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir (1931–1940)*, 34–35.
182. Khayal, *Iqbal Aur Tehreek-e-Azadi-e-Kashmir*, 26–27.
183. *Kashmir Life*, “Maharaja Pratap Singh even Banned Burial of the Dead,” 30 March 2013. Accessed 4 January 2017, from <http://www.kashmirlife.net/maharaja-pratap-singh-even-banned-burial-of-the-dead-issue-03-vol-05-61123/>
184. Schofield, *The Kashmir Conflict: India, Pakistan and the Unending War*, 17.
185. Biscoe, *Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade*, 79.
186. Biscoe, *Tyndale Biscoe in Kashmir*, 52.
187. Biscoe, *Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade*, 22.
188. Handa, *History of Freedom Struggle in Princely States*, 249; Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir*, p. 45, endnote 95.
189. Glancy Commission Report, 1932.
190. Representation to the Viceroy, Lord Reading by Khudams of Khanqah-i-Mualla, Shah Hamdan, Srinagar on 29 September 1924.
191. Mehjoor, *Mehjoor Ki Sarkari Mulazimat: Aik Maani Khaiz Aur Ibrat Angez Roidaad Sheeraza* (Urdu), 114–15.
192. Tota Koul was an employee in the Accountant General’s office in Kashmir during Mahāraja Hari Singh’s time. He was a blue-eyed boy of his officer. On the eve of his attaining superannuation, his officer sent a proposal for extension in his service, arguing that Tota Koul’s services were indispensable, and his retirement would adversely affect the working of the office. The extension was granted. When the extended term was about to end, a similar proposal was moved and met with success. On the third time, when the proposal was sent to Hari Singh, the Maharaja refused approval and noted on the file, “Tota Koul or no Tota Koul, the affairs of the State will run. Rejected.”

Chapter Five

Blood

The Dogra rule was in the 84th year of its repressive existence¹ when on 13 July 1931 its soldiers gunned down 22 unarmed Muslims at the Srinagar Central Jail. The victims were part of a crowd that had gathered there to witness the trial of Abdul Qadeer Khan charged for inciting Kashmiri Muslims against Hari Singh's rule. Khan, a butler with an officer of the Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry at Peshawar,² then on vacation in Kashmir, was agitated by the reign of oppression in Kashmir. On 21 June, when Kashmiri Muslims had assembled at the Khanqah-i-Mualla to protest against the incidents of desecration of the Qur'an and official interference in the delivery of the mandatory sermon at the Friday prayers that happened earlier in Jammu, Khan appeared from nowhere, made a fiery speech and asked Kashmiris to revolt against the tyranny. He was arrested and charged with sedition. On the day of his trial in the Central Jail Srinagar on 13 July, a large number of people who gathered there, in solidarity with Khan, were fired upon by the Dogra army leading to 22 fatal casualties including 17 on the spot. The incident resulted in massive public resentment and an organized movement against the Dogra tyranny. Subsequently, the day became to be observed as the Martyrs' Day in Kashmir. The incident led to suspension of Qadeer's trial,³ but later, on 17 August, the Sessions Judge, on charges of 'sedition and promoting enmity', sentenced him to five years' rigorous imprisonment and a fine of 50 rupees or, in default, to a further year's imprisonment.⁴

The 13 July 1931 incident is generally considered as the beginning of the resistance movement in Kashmir. That, however, would be an incorrect statement as resistance in Kashmir dates back to the 16th century. An odd aspect of this resistance, however, is that the majority community could not enlist support of their non-Muslim

compatriots, whether it was against the Muslim occupying forces such as the Mughals and the Afghans or non-Muslim tyrannies such as the Sikhs and the Dogras. Unlike their significant presence in the successive administration of the occupying regimes, the Kashmiri Pandit footprint on the road to resistance against these forces in Kashmir is almost totally absent. Before the Mughals annexed Kashmir in 1586 AD, they had made several unsuccessful attempts to grab it. Many a time the Mughal troops entered Kashmir but were either sent back or withdrew in the face of stiff resistance. During the rule of Babur in India, his troops entered the Valley in 1528. Their presence resulted in widespread resentment, and the Mughal soldiers were presented with gifts and sent back.⁵ After Babur, his son Humayun's troops also invaded Kashmir and seized Srinagar but could not withstand the guerrilla warfare of Kashmiri resistance forces that ambushed them in the city and inflicted heavy casualties on them. The Mughal troops made peace overtures, and after an agreement with the Kashmiri resistance returned to Lahore via Baramulla.⁶

The next attempt to capture Kashmir was made by the Mughals in 1533 when Babur's cousin, Mirza Haider Doghlat, at the head of an army entered the Valley via Zojila.⁷ The Kashmiris soon recovered from the initial shock of defeat and organized resistance. They hung on to the enemy soldiers, harassed them and stalled their movement. Finally, Doghlat was counselled by his advisor, Ali Taghai, to withdraw from Kashmir as it would be difficult to conquer it. Under an agreement reached between the two sides in 1533, the Mughal army finally left Kashmir from the same route that it had entered the Valley from.⁸ In 1540, Doghlat returned through the Poonch Pass and captured the Valley. A king was installed on the throne of Kashmir but Doghlat himself wielded real power. The Kashmiri resistance again showed up and fought several battles with the enemy troops. In 1551, they chased the Mughal army in a battle at Mankot near Poonch and the overpowered Mughals took to their heels, but many of them were killed and their baggage seized. The commander of the Mughal soldiers, Qara Bahadur, was arrested, but the rest of his garrison fled from the battlefield.⁹ The leader of the Kashmiri resistance, Idi Raina, marched towards Srinagar. Later, Doghlat was killed at Khampur in central Kashmir. His widow made peace with

Kashmiri resistance leaders following which the family and followers of Doghlat were dispatched via Pakhli and Kabul to Kashghar.¹⁰ A year after the death of Doghlat, Afghan warlord, Haibat Khan Niazi, marched to Kashmir but was defeated and killed along with his many chieftains by Idi Raina.¹¹

Akbar could not digest the thought of Kashmir as an independent country in his close neighbourhood. He made his first foray into the Valley in 1560 when he dispatched a large invading force, but as the expected support from some Kashmiri nobles was not forthcoming, the Mughal army did not advance further from Rajouri. However, Kashmiri troops under Kaji Chak attacked and defeated the Mughal army. An award of an *ashrafi* was announced for each head of Mughal soldiers, and 700 heads were brought to collect the award.¹² In the meanwhile, Yusuf Shah Chak faced revolt and had to abdicate the throne within two months of his coronation. In 1580, he went to Agra and sought Akbar's aid to regain his crown. Akbar dispatched his troops with Yusuf Shah Chak under Raja Man Singh's command. When Yusuf reached Lahore his former minister Muhammad Bhat advised him against bringing the Mughal army to Kashmir, for he feared it would be an unpopular development, and the Mughals might take over the administration and enforce their own laws.¹³ Yusuf managed troops on his own and was able to regain his throne. In the meanwhile, Akbar asked Yusuf thrice to make personal appearance at his court which he avoided on the advice of his counsellors. He sent his son to Akbar with gifts. An infuriated Akbar sent 5,000 troops to invade Kashmir. Yusuf who was overawed by Akbar had no option but to prepare for defence. The Mughals were fought back. Inclement weather, besides scarcity of food supplies and stiff resistance offered by Kashmiri forces, added to their woes and they failed to make progress.¹⁴ The retreating Mughal commander, Bhagwan Dass, sent a word to Yusuf that they would return with a stronger army and make Kashmiri resistance impossible. He suggested that Yusuf should make personal appearance before Akbar. The nobility again advised Yusuf against taking such a step, but the mentally defeated king betrayed them and escaped to the Mughal camp in February 1586.¹⁵

Yusuf's betrayal did not stop Kashmiris to put up resistance against the Mughals and they placed his son, Yaqoob, on the throne, inflicted

heavy casualties on the enemy troops and forced them to make peace overtures. A treaty of peace was reached between the two sides under which Yusuf's throne was restored to him. However, when Yusuf was presented before Akbar at Attock on 28 March 1586, he was imprisoned in a clear breach of the treaty which led a dejected Bhagwan Dass to attempt suicide.¹⁶ Later, Yusuf was released but not allowed to return to Kashmir. Instead, he was dispatched to Biswak in Bihar where he died yearning to go back to his country. Yaqoob's sectarian bigotry annoyed his nobles who conspired against him and sent a delegation to Akbar to invade Kashmir. Akbar was waiting for such an opportunity and invaded Kashmir again. His troops faced stiff resistance and suffered severe beating at various places. The Mughal army lost many soldiers—300 in a fight at Gusu and 1,500 in another at Hanjik.¹⁷ The commander of the Mughal army, Qasim Khan, was so disheartened that he requested Akbar to call him back, but the latter sent him reinforcement instead.

Akbar's army was ultimately successful in annexing Kashmir, but for a long time it encountered resistance and for two months did not dare to come out of the city. Eventually, it was able to douse the flames of resistance. In 1588, Akbar found the situation conducive to undertake his first visit to Kashmir. In the words of Forster, "Akbar subdued it [Kashmir], aided more, it is said, by intrigue, than the force of his arms." The Mughal soldiers were hated for their presence in Kashmir as an army of occupation and there happened many ugly incidents involving the Mughal soldiers and Kashmiris. Akbar was so exasperated by the rebellious behaviour of Kashmiris that he had many of their "chieftains along with families bodily lifted and sent to different parts of India where they were granted *jagir*."¹⁸ Some with their kith and kin were taken as prisoners and moved out with the royal entourage.¹⁹ On one such occasion, a soldier tortured a civilian; this anguished people and, fearing breach of peace, Mughal Governor's son, Mirza Askar, ordered his arrest, but the soldier escaped. However, to restore people's confidence, he asked for a big boat filled with firewood and, as if the erring soldier was inside it, burnt the boat on the waters of the Jhelum.²⁰

After the Mughals, the Afghans invaded Kashmir in 1748 and penetrated up to Srinagar but could not resist the onslaught by the

enemy. The Afghan commander, Asmat Ullah, was killed and his army scattered and finally annihilated. Subsequently, Ahmad Shah Abdali could take over Kashmir in 1753 but not before his army suffered heavy losses in a battle that lasted 15 days near Shopiyan. The Afghans faced insurgency which was ultimately dealt with by Governor, Nooruddin Khan. When the Sikhs occupied Kashmir in 1819, they were weary of its majority population's hostility, accustomed as they were to bitter opposition by Muslims in Punjab and the Frontier. They ruled Kashmir ruthlessly and promulgated rules to check the emergence of opposition by the Muslim population. They banned *azan* and seized mosques including the Srinagar's Jama Masjid even as one Sikh governor attempted demolition of the most sacred Muslim shrine of Khanqah-i-Mualla. The Sikhs also faced fierce resistance and attacks from the warrior tribes of Khokhas and Bombas from the areas now in Pakistan Administered Kashmir who would frequently invade the valley. They were a constant source of anxiety and danger for the Sikhs. A British officer in 1822 had to return from Uri as the Khokhas did not allow him passage to Kashmir.

When after the infamous Treaty of Amritsar the Dogras arrived in Kashmir in 1846, they had to face rout at the hands of Kashmiri resistance forces in the Battle of Maisuma claiming their commander, Lakhpat Rai.²¹ It was only the British intervention that saved the day for the Dogras. Their 100-year long rule was marked by naked aggression against Muslims as discussed in the preceding chapter. An idea about how the Dogras treated their Muslim subjects even towards the closing years was given by Albion Rajkumar Banerjee, a Bengali civil service officer, who as prime minister of the last Dogra ruler resigned in 1929 on moral grounds after making the following observations:

Jammu and Kashmir State is labouring under many disadvantages, with a large Mohammedan [Muslim] population absolutely illiterate, labouring under poverty and very low economic conditions of living in the villages, and practically governed like dumb driven cattle. There is no touch between the government and the people, no suitable opportunity for representing grievances.... The administration has at present no or little sympathy with people's wants and grievances.

There is hardly any public opinion in the State. As regards the press it is practically non-existent with the result the Government is not benefitted to the extent it should be by the impact of healthy criticism.²²

Kashmir being a landlocked valley, the plight of the Kashmiri people for long remained veiled by its boundaries. However, in the late 19th century, European travellers started trickling in. This gave a peep to the outside world into what was going on inside Kashmir. Although the travelogues of these Europeans spoke in small measure about the pitiable conditions Kashmiris lived in under their foreign rulers, the duty to fully unveil their plight at the hands of “one of the meanest, most avaricious, cruel and unprincipled of men that ever sat upon a throne”²³ was destined to fall on the shoulders of a half-Kashmiri, Robert Thorp. He came to Kashmir as a game lover and was appalled to see the pathetic condition of its people. He wrote articles and published those in newspapers back in England. His writings presented graphic accounts of unthinkable cruelty that human race ever suffered. In 1868, Thorp, whose father had married a Kashmiri woman, was poisoned to death in Kashmir and, thus, became the first non-local martyr to the Kashmir cause. Also, a large number of starved and persecuted Kashmiri Muslims in small groups moved out of the Valley to have a respite from torture and oppression and to earn a few morsels as well. With them the heart-rending stories from Kashmir also travelled, specifically to the plains of the Punjab.

Towards the end of the 19th century and in the first quarter of the 20th, people outside Kashmir were fairly acquainted with the happenings in the Valley. Punjab was then the main centre of the Indian Press. Leading newspapers published from here were divided into the Hindu and the Muslim camps. While both supported and propagated reforms and freedom for India from the British rule, the Hindu Press surprisingly firmly stood behind an oppressive and unpopular Dogra ruler in Kashmir. Not only did these newspapers justify the Kashmir Government’s actions against the Muslim majority but also liberally used their columns to create an atmosphere of contempt and hatred against them in the Hindu majority India. Some of the newspapers published from Lahore like the *Weekly Amar* boastfully announced on their front pages as being *Riyasat-i-Jammu Wa Kashmir Ka*

Haqueeqi Tarjumaan (The real spokesman of the State of Jammu and Kashmir). Naturally, it fell upon the Muslim Press to give voice to the misfortune of the Kashmir's majority population. Newspapers such as *Zamindar*, *Inqilab*, *Siasat*, *Alfaaz*, *Paisa Akhbaar*, *Panja-e-Faulad*, *Kashmir Mussalman*, *Sadaqat* and *Lahore Chronicle* were instrumental in creating awareness and interest, especially among Muslims, in British India about the state of affairs in Kashmir. The formation of the Kashmir Committee and protest marches in various Indian states over the massacre in Srinagar on 13 July 1931 was the result of this awareness. All India Majlis-i-Ahrar also joined the fray, and 4,500 of its volunteers entered the State boundaries in Jammu to express solidarity with the Muslims of Kashmir and secure a 'responsible government' for them. The development took the Kashmir Government and its supporters aback. Jia Lal Kilam, a Kashmiri Pandit leader who later became a judge of the State High Court, reacted in a bizarre manner by raising the question: "Why all of a sudden they should have conceived a strong desire of securing responsible Government for twenty-eight lacs of Kashmiri Muslims, when eight crores of the Indian Muslims are denied this blessing."²⁴ Great logic!

Newspapers such as the *Milap*, the *Pratap*, the *Tribune*, the *Amar*, the *Karam Vir* and the *Guru Ghantal* became the voice of the oppressor. These newspapers, while defending the Dogra rule, took upon themselves the job of presenting the Kashmir movement and Muslims, in general, in a bad light. While the Kashmir Government banned entry of the newspapers highlighting maltreatment of the Muslim majority in its territory, the Hindu Press continued with its "poisonous reporting."²⁵ The *Pratap* and the *Milap*, in particular, highlighted the so-called 'atrocities and rebellious activities' of the Muslims in such a manner that "the Government and Hindu brethren would wipe them out from the face of the earth."²⁶ The news and articles published by these newspapers "are hundred percent untrue and fabrication and begin with [the words like] 'it is heard', 'it is stated', 'it is said', 'it is learnt' which establish that these are only rumours and hearsay and need confirmation."²⁷ At one point, the Kashmir Government had to issue a rejoinder to the news reports carried by the *Milap* and the *Pratap* suggesting that the Maharaja had dismissed his Muslim private staff including chefs and butlers, and Sheikh Azizuddin, Deputy Inspector

General of Police, had proceeded on leave. An official press release described both the news reports as baseless, prompting the *Kashmir Amritsar* to observe that the “foolish friends of the Government are either so out of their mind or overwhelmed by their desire to malign the Muslims that they overlook the possibility of such reports putting to question the impartiality of the Maharaja and the Kashmir Government.”²⁸

The deep resentment of the masses building up as it were for long exploded on 13 July 1931. In the words of Dr Ghulam Hassan Khan, a Kashmir University professor and author of *Freedom Movement in Kashmir (1931–1940)*, it was the beginning of an organized freedom struggle initiated by the Muslims of Kashmir against autocracy in which they had been suffering untold miseries for more than eight decades.²⁹ The causes of the Muslim unrest were many, chief among them being pitiable economic condition of peasants who constituted 80 per cent of Kashmir’s population and had no proprietary rights on land,³⁰ *kaar-i-sarkar* or labour requisitioned for State purposes,³¹ treating Kashmiri Muslims as subject race,³² discrimination against the majority community in government services,³³ absence of basic rights and civil liberties,³⁴ and religious bias.³⁵ The Muslims were

treated more unfairly in every sphere of life than the Kashmiri Hindus.... The poverty of the Muslim masses was appalling. Dressed in rags which could hardly hide his body and barefooted, a Muslim peasant presented the appearance rather of a starving beggar than one of who filled the coffers of the State.³⁶

That being the general condition of the Muslims, however, the immediate cause of unrest was incidents of banning of the mandatory sermon by an *imam* on Eid prayers and desecration of Holy Qur'an at Jammu. The developments worked as a matchstick to the already inflammable civic anger.

On 29 April 1931, Muslims at Jammu were offering Eid prayers when a police officer, Babu Khem Chand, stopped the *Imam*, Molvi Atta Ullah Shah Bukhari, from delivering the mandatory *khutba* in which he spoke about the cruel king of ancient Egypt, Pharaoh, as narrated in the Qur'an. The sub-inspector of police accused the *imam* of making a political speech and disallowed the *khutba*. This

was a serious interference in the religious matters of the Muslims who held a protest meeting where Choudhary Gowhar Rehman, Secretary of the newly established Young Men's Muslim Association, Jammu, said:

Our political suppression and educational backwardness were sufficient to ruin our life. Our little left religious freedom is now being crushed. We remained silent when we saw the State ignoring our economic backwardness and poverty. We did not utter a single word when things lawful for us were made unlawful.... For God's sake, tell us, how long we shall be forced to remain mum. Muslims should now make every effort to live a life of peace and honour.³⁷

There happened at least two more incidents in Jammu that infuriated the Muslims. In one incident, the upper caste Hindus in the Dagora village of Samba *tehsil* stopped Muslims from drawing water from a tank for performing ablution for Eid prayers as per the old practice. Due to the intervention by police, the Muslims could not offer the prayers in time. Another incident was grave in nature in which a Hindu head constable at the Central Jail Jammu allegedly threw the *Panj surah*, compilation of five chapters of Holy Qur'an, on the ground when a Muslim constable, Fazal Dad, was reading it.³⁸ The incident infuriated the Muslims, and when the news reached Srinagar, there was commotion in the city. A protest meeting was held at Khanqah-i-Mualla on 21 June 1931 where tens of thousands of Muslims assembled. The meeting resulted in the formation of a collective leadership comprising seven representatives including Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and *Mirwaiz* Molvi Muhammad Yusuf Shah. As the meeting was about to close, Abdul Qadeer Khan appeared on the stage and made a speech in which he told the gathering:

Muslim brethren! The time has now come when we should meet force by greater force to put an end to the tyrannies and brutalities to which you are subjected; nor will they solve the issue of disrespect to Holy Quran to your satisfaction. You must rely upon your own strength and wage a relentless war against oppression. [Pointing his finger towards the palace, he thundered:] Raise it to the ground.³⁹

The District Magistrate had deputed his junior, Pandit Sat Lal, a city magistrate, to attend the public meeting at Khanqah-i-Mualla in his official capacity. However, Lal left the venue before the crowd had fully dispersed and Abdul Qadeer Khan had made his speech. He also did not submit any report, oral or written, on what had transpired at the meeting. For dereliction of duty, he was demoted one grade for a period of one year. The order of his demotion, signed by Maharaja Hari Singh himself, on 23 June 1931 charged Lal with, besides leaving the venue before a 'seditious' speech was made there and failing to submit a report on the proceedings of the meeting, quietly putting up "with the insult offered to him as a representative of Government when the convenors of the meeting refused to give him a chair to sit on and made him sit on the floor."⁴⁰ Concurrent with the demotion of Sat Lal, another order signed by Hari Singh the same day enjoined upon a district magistrate to depute in future an additional district magistrate to all important public meetings who must submit a written report "particularly whether any proceeding was objectionable in the interest of the State or of public peace and order."⁴¹

The fiery speech resulted in Qadeer's arrest and trial. As the Muslims in large numbers expressed solidarity with the accused and remained present at every hearing, the authorities "finding the atmosphere highly charged with Mohammadan emotionalism"⁴² shifted the venue of the trial from the court of the Sessions Judge to the Central Jail where Khan was lodged. The day of hearing was 13 July, in the jail premises, when about five thousand Muslims assembled outside the jail and raised pro-Qadeer Khan slogans. What followed is recorded by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah in his memoir thus:

As the defence lawyer, Molvi Abdullah Vakil, stepped into the jail premises a stream of people also got in with him. The jail officials were unnerved. However, on our directions, the defence lawyer persuaded them to move out of the jail premises with assurance that some of them would be called in to witness the court proceedings. Meanwhile, prayer time had approached and people began to stand in rows for offering prayers in the garden. In the meantime, the jail officials informed the Governor, Raizada Trilok Chand, about the matter who arrived with a contingent of armed police. First, he lashed out at the jail officials for allowing

the crowd inside the jail premises and then ordered arrest of the peaceful people standing outside the jail. The police started indiscriminate arrests which infuriated people and they indulged in stone pelting. In his short-sightedness, the Governor ordered opening of fire. The mouths of guns were opened towards the people who were standing in rows for the prayers in the garden. A Muslim had climbed the wall for giving a call to prayer when a bullet hit him and he fell dead there. Such was the euphoria that he was quickly replaced by another person who continued with the call to prayer and he too was shot dead. In this manner 22 daredevils were martyred. The injured were in hundreds. When the tormenter was done with oppression the oppressed too were ready to kill or die. They set the jail police lines on fire and burnt its furniture. They made a flag of the blood soaked shirt of a martyr, lifted the dead and the injured on charpoys and proceeded towards the city. What could be a greater proof of the success of the martyrs that Mr. [Prime Minister] Wakefield later admitted that "all martyrs had wounds on their chests and not on their backs."⁴³

Dr Ghulam Hassan Khan has traced the sequence of events leading to the bloodshed in the following words:

The people had been asked to be present on the occasion. Accordingly, an estimated mob of four to five thousand people had gone to witness the trial. But before the hearing of the case started, a crowd of about two hundred people had entered the compound and remained in peace outside the Jail Guard Lines. By 12.30, the muezzin gave call to prayer and the people started the zuhar prayer. A little later the District Magistrate, the City Munsiff, the Superintendent of Police and the Assistant Superintendent of Police arrived in cars. No sooner did they come out of their vehicles than the people shouted the slogans, 'Allah-o-Akbar [Allah is Great]', 'Islam Zindabad [Long live Islam]', and 'Abdul Qadeer Zindabad [Long live Abdul Qadeer]'. The police charged them with batons. The infuriated people fought the police back with stones and brickbats. This was immediately followed by a face-to-face fight between the people and the police. In this fight one, Ghulam Mohammad Halwai, a retired police man, pounced upon a police sergeant Ghulam Qadir Khan

snatching the gun from him. Before he could handle the gun a Head Constable shot him dead. In order to quell the mob, the police started firing which continued for fifteen minutes, “killing ten Muslims and injuring many others”. Finding that the people were resolute and determined, the authorities suddenly stopped the firing and the police disappeared. The people rushed into the jail compound. They took out bedsteads from the quarters of the jail guards, placed on them the dead and the injured and carried them to the Jamia Masjid. A section of the crowd tried to set the jail on fire. But the situation was saved by the timely intervention of the fire brigade.⁴⁴

Pir Qamaruddin Vakil, an eyewitness who arrived at the Jail 10 or 15 minutes after the Sessions Judge,⁴⁵ said that about 15 men were arrested and brought inside the jail. He denied that the crowd outside the jail threw stones when these men were arrested and asserted that firing started within three or four minutes of these arrests.⁴⁶ Vakil also refuted the official stand that the Deputy Inspector General of Police, Sheikh Azizuddin, had cried out to the crowd that it was an unlawful assembly and that it must disperse.⁴⁷ Vakil saw a gathering of 200 or 300 people inside the jail compound and noticed another crowd sitting in the Badam Bagh (Almond Garden) outside the jail.⁴⁸ Defence lawyer, Molvi Mohammad Abdullah Vakil, who had arrived about two or two and a half hours earlier than the Session Judge, too denied that Azizuddin went to the crowd and cried to them that they were an unlawful assembly. “No, this is quite false. He never went out to say anything to the crowd,” the lawyer was categorical.⁴⁹ He saw about 200–300 men entering the cart road when the car of the judge entered the gate.⁵⁰ The Sessions Judge told him to go out and ask the crowd to be silent and not make any noise. The lawyer ascended a table and told the crowd that they had no right to remain there as it was not proper. “On hearing this, the entire crowd went out of the compound, excepting one man, who had fallen down. Two or three men also remained there, saying they would look after him.”⁵¹ The man reportedly had been kicked by a police officer, “in consequence of which he could not move.”⁵²

The eyewitnesses account established that the jail premises were cleared of the crowd that had entered there. After the people moved

out of the compound, a police officer told three Muslim lawyers—Pir Qamaruddin Vakil, Molvi Abdullah Vakil and Ghulam Mohammad, BA LLB—to tell the people who were in the garden or stood on the wayside not to enter the jail compound. “All three of us went therefore into the garden and gave the same directions to them as the police officer had told us to give.”⁵³ The people were asked why they had come there upon which they told the lawyer trio that they had come to hear the decision of the case. They were made to understand that they should not enter the jail premises. “They replied that they would go to their homes after offering their prayers. They actually began their prayers and we went into the gaol premises.”⁵⁴ What happened immediately after that was summed up by Pir Qamaruddin Vakil thus:

Making straight to the room where the Sessions Judge was sitting the governor [presumably of the prison] entered in the room between. He enquired of Messrs, Abdul Karim and Habibullah, both of the police department, as to who the men were who had come into the compound. They replied that they did not know them. The governor thereupon ordered them to go out and arrest them, otherwise he would dismiss both of them. The policemen—not only these two but many others—rushed out at once with their iron chains on the spot where the people were peacefully offering their prayers and began to arrest people indiscriminately and brought into the gaol many such individuals. Upon this there was a hue and cry in the crowd; in the meanwhile I observed that the guns were being worked at. I observed some stones also falling in. The day of hearing being adjourned to a future date, we came out of the gaol premises and I saw the military infantry as well as some cavalry near the police lines. The governor was giving them instructions. A police officer was also telling the military horsemen that they would have to meet a mob in the city and they should for that reason be very careful.⁵⁵

A day after the 13 July bloodshed; Maharaja Hari Singh appointed an enquiry commission under Barjor Dalal, Chief Justice of ‘His Highness’ High Court, with two judges of the court and a non-official Muslim and Hindu each as commissioner. The commission was asked to enquire and report upon “the circumstances which led to the recent

disturbances at the Jail, Maharajgunj, and other localities in the city of Srinagar and the sufficiency or otherwise of the action taken to anticipate and deal with the above disturbances.” The commission was also asked “to make recommendations related to the restoring of communal peace and harmony as quickly as possible and prevention of such deplorable occurrences in future.” The Muslims did not trust the commission and within 24 hours of his nomination, Khawaja Saaduddin Shawl tendered his resignation and was quickly substituted by Ghulam Ahmad Ashai who too declined to accept his nomination. The refusal by Muslim nominees to be part of the commission forced Hari Singh to dissolve it and instead order an official enquiry to be held by Chief Justice Dalal and two judges of the High Court. The Enquiry Committee examined 112 witnesses, some in public and others in camera.

Expecting the Enquiry Committee to nail the Maharaja’s government for the massacre would be asking for the impossible. The Chief Justice and the judges of the High Court were no more independent than officials of any other department of Hari Singh’s government. They conducted the enquiry and submitted the report to the Maharaja as “Your Highness’s most obedient and most humble servants.”⁵⁶ In the words of the committee itself, since no party to the enquiry—government, the Muslims and the Hindus—“had any case ready to present to us” and none of “these parties was represented at the bar of the trial,” the committee was “left to our own endeavours and good sense to arrive at the truth.”⁵⁷ It appeared to be at pains to absolve the men and officers of the government responsible for the killing of unarmed people and throw the mud of culpability on the victims. The bias against the Muslims freely flowed through the lines and the paragraphs of the report. It believed everything told by the government functionaries from a constable to the governor and found fault with everything that independent Muslim witnesses told about the sequence of events leading to the massacre.

The learned judges accepted the account of soldiers Subedar Attar Singh, Nayak Onkar Singh and Sepoy Abhay Singh, who fired and killed a Muslim and wounded two others at Nawab Bazar, that they were attacked by a crowd and were compelled to fire. However, when Mrs Thakur Das, a Hindu lady, testified through a written statement,

that "the sepoys fired without a cause" and "a military man opened fire on a man who had taken to his heels and was running away and also at a water-carrier who was merely going across the bridge,"⁵⁸ her statement was dismissed as a possible outcome of "a grudge against the government," for the lady having been reverted from a temporary post in the health department "on the ground of incapacity."⁵⁹ Worse, the witness was sought to be discredited on the assumption that "she may be hoping to improve her practice as a midwife in a Mohammadan neighbourhood by making a statement to bring discredit on the military as it is desire of the general Mohammadan public to do."⁶⁰ Chief of the Military Staff, Brigadier Sutherland, was quoted as having questioned Mrs Thakur Das and the lady telling him that the crowd had thrown stones at the troops before they opened fire. As per the enquiry report itself, Mrs Thakur Das denied having made such a statement, but the learned judges accepted the contention of the Brigadier with the observation that "there can be no question as to whose word preference should be given."⁶¹

The testimony of prominent Muslims like Dr Noor Din Khan that his house was attacked by Hindus with the help of cavalry men and of Maulvi Noor Din Qari that a cavalry man arrested him without cause did not merit any consideration by the Enquiry Committee. The testimony was rejected because the complainants had alleged that the cavalry men carried arms when Brigadier Sutherland, "an officer of long experience not only in the army but in similar situations of Military Troops in occupation of civil areas" 'certified' that "the cavalry did not carry any rifle during the occupation of the city."⁶² Between Sutherland and the two Muslim witnesses, the committee knew whose word had to be given preference. For the Enquiry Committee, the Hindus formulated their case through their "representatives"⁶³ and the Muslim witnesses that the committee examined were put up by the "so-called Muslim representatives."⁶⁴ The desire of some Muslim witnesses to depose in camera, for the possible reason of avoiding the wrath of the accused killer officers, was described as the men having "come prepared to tell lies."⁶⁵ The governor admitted that he gave orders which resulted in firing 11 times; the firing resulted in the death of 22 persons and injuries to many more, and yet the learned judges came to the conclusion that "the firing was not prolonged

beyond what was necessary.”⁶⁶ In the opinion of the learned judges, the incidents of the desecration of the holy Qur'an and stopping the *imam* of a mosque from delivering the Friday sermon at Jammu were “purely accidental” and the infuriated Muslims who agitated against these sacrilegious acts were “ignorant Mohammadan masses.”⁶⁷

The committee selectively enquired the allegations of loot following the bloody incident at the Srinagar Jail. It heard and reported on, in fact, devoted a full chapter to, the allegations of loot of Hindu properties by Muslims but declined to hear complaints of Muslims about loot of their houses and shops by the Hindus assisted by the army. They were advised to “prove their cases in Court of Law.”⁶⁸ Observing that the complaints of loot made by the Muslims were “outside the scope of our enquiry,” the learned judges, however, were very quick to absolve the army of the alleged crime. Without giving any clue as to how it reached to this conclusion, the committee gave a clean chit to the army and made the following observation on the allegations that the troops had joined the Hindus in looting the Muslim houses and shops:

We are satisfied that this allegation is fabricated merely to bring discredit to the military, who saved the situation and prevented the Mohammadans from committing further depredations. In our opinion, these allegations are made with a view to escape the employment of the military if there should be any subsequent similar occasion.⁶⁹

The chapter on loot starts with the conclusion: “There can be no doubt as to loot having taken place at Maharajgunj Bazar, in Vicharnag and in other quarters of Hindu shops and houses by the Mohammadans.”⁷⁰ The ‘independent and reliable evidence’ leading the committee to this conclusion was given by Col. Nawab Khusru Jang, G. E. C. Wakefield, Brigadier Sutherland and Eric Biscoe. It may be in place to recall that barring Biscoe, all other gentlemen were high ranking officials of the government in the dock. However, according to the statements made by these gentlemen before the Enquiry Committee, when Jang arrived at Maharajgunj “after the loot” with contingent of palace guards, he was “satisfied from the appearance of locality at the time that Hindu shops had been looted a short time before he reached the place.”⁷¹ Wakefield and Sutherland were also reported

to have drawn "the same conclusion from what they saw on arrival between 4 and 5 P.M."⁷² That is all these witnesses had to say about the alleged loot of Hindu shops at Maharajgunj.

Sutherland told the Enquiry Committee that the 'looting' at Maharajgunj was not pre-planned and that the same crowd that attacked the Central Jail was involved at Maharajgunj after the firing incident at the Jail.⁷³ None of these 'independent and reliable' men had actually witnessed looting of Hindu shops. Eric Biscoe, Principal of the Christian Missionary C. M. H. School, was the only one among the 'independent and reliable' witnesses who, we are told, "actually saw looting going on beyond Maharajgunj in a small alley leading towards Alikadal." He was reported to have "noticed the whole street filled with debris and actually Mohammadans looting shops which he believed to be Hindu shops."⁷⁴ The boys accompanying Biscoe reportedly cleared the road of the debris which was blocking the way and "consisted of broken glass, bags of grain and various sorts of goods mostly groceries."⁷⁵ From the account of Biscoe, two things come out clearly. One, that the spot where he saw looting going on was not some distant place from Maharajgunj where non-local Hindu traders were allegedly looted but, in fact, was the same place or a few yards away from the market of Hindu traders. Alikadal is a locality close to Maharajgunj, and Biscoe was actually talking about an alley leading to Alikadal, not Alikadal itself. Second, by the description of the scene in the alley it appeared that the 'loot' actually was ransacking of shops and throwing the goods on the road as 'bags of grain and various sorts of goods mostly groceries' lay scattered in the alley and obviously the 'looters' had not decamped with the loot.

As regards Vicharnag, the committee visited the locality "long after the occurrence,"⁷⁶ and

[A] view of the house of Pandit Kailash Butt (W.63, P:) convinced us that everything in the house was ransacked, his property stolen, and his Account-books torn. A large iron safe was carried out and broken there and was lying on the road when we went, in a broken condition.⁷⁷

Strange as it may seem, the alleged scene of the crime remained unchanged 'long after the occurrence'. The report does not mention any other evidence of loot at Vicharnag except that one Pandit,

Shri Kant Khar, stated that the alleged looters came “from the direction of Sovra, a suburb of Srinagar and did not come from the direction of the Jail.”⁷⁸ The Enquiry Committee, however, acknowledged the probability of “[the] news of the firing and deaths of the Mohammadans at the Jail having already arrived at the Vicharnag quarter to excite the Mohammadans.”⁷⁹ Pandit Aftab Kar, Head Master, Anglo Vernacular Primary School, Vicharnag, deposed that he was beaten and his clothes were torn by ‘Muslim rioters’. He admitted that “some Muslims treated him well.”⁸⁰

Sutherland and Wakfield visited Vicharnag on 16 July. In his statement made before the Enquiry Committee, Sutherland made a significant point. He said that when he and Wakfield were at Vicharnag, not a single Hindu complained about his house having been looted. He told the committee that if the Hindus had made any complaint, they would have definitely inspected their ‘looted houses’.⁸¹ “Our motor [car] was encircled by people on the road leading from Nowshehra to Vicharnag. Nobody complained to us about the loot,”⁸² Sutherland informed the committee. On 30 August 1931, the Lahore-based newspaper, *Guru Ghantal*, published the Kashmir Number. In one of the articles on, what it called, ‘the armed rebellion of some mischievous and hot-headed Muslims’ against Hari Singh, the newspaper accused them of “igniting Kashmir internally, instigating Muslims and looting Hindus of Maharajgunj.” The publication is as close to the date of ‘occurrence’ as it could get and does not mention any incident of loot at Vicharnag.

Back to the incident at the Central Jail on 13 July, the police had fired 180 rounds and 17 Muslims were killed⁸³ on the spot while many were injured, among whom five died at the Jama Masjid⁸⁴ where the dead and the injured were taken from the scene of the massacre. The killing of unarmed people sent shock waves across Kashmir. The procession, carrying the dead and the injured, recited verses from the Holy Qur'an and raised slogans while marching towards the city. When an injured was being carried for treatment to the government hospital at Maharajgunj, a non-Kashmiri Hindu trader, Lala Bhagat Krishen Chand, passed derisive remarks about the Muslims and the dead and the injured. Maharajgunj in the old city was one of the main markets set up by the Dogras where they had brought Punjabi Hindu

traders known as *Khatri*s, who as wholesalers monopolized business in Srinagar and were loyal to the Hindu Maharaja. The incident proved proverbial, adding salt to the injury of the aggrieved Muslims, and a fracas broke between them and the Punjabi traders. A local *tongawalla*, Ghulam Nabi, was ruthlessly beaten by the Hindus.⁸⁵ The agitated Muslims attacked the shop of Lala Bhagat Krishen Chand and some neighbouring shops of Hindu traders and threw the goods out on the road. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah recalls the incident in the following words:

On enquiry it came out that some Muslims were carrying on a cot the body of a martyr to his home in Wazapora and an injured on another cot for medical assistance to Maharajgunj Hospital. When they reached Maharajgunj the Hindu shopkeepers from Punjab, who had wrested the entire trade of Kashmir, made fun of them. When the aggrieved Muslims in the name of human sympathy over this unjust bloodshed, asked these *khatri* shopkeepers to close their shops they made derisive comments instead of expressing sympathy with them. This created tension. Some Muslims attacked few Hindu shopkeepers and threw out their merchandise. As hoodlums take advantage of such situations so they looted some goods and hid those in their homes. However, when the situation returned to normal not only the stolen goods were recovered during the police search but their personal items were also taken away.⁸⁶

For author and columnist Abdul Majid Zargar, there was no major incident or, what was subsequently termed as, 'rioting' at Maharajgunj on 13 July. According to him a minor clash took place between some Muslims who had gone there to get white cloth for shrouds for the dead and Punjabi Hindu traders who sold cloth in wholesale. A trader reportedly passed some 'obscene and uncalled for remarks' leading to argument and clash between the two sides. Later, an enraged mob appeared on the scene, beat the shopkeeper and threw his goods on the roadside, some of which was possibly pilfered.⁸⁷

The incident resulted in a quarrel between the aggrieved Muslims and non-Kashmiri Hindu traders in which, unfortunately, Kashmiri Pandits made a common cause with the latter against the former.⁸⁸ In the meanwhile, the leaders of the Muslim community were arrested.

The dead brought to the Jama Masjid could not be laid to rest the same day as the government did not permit people to join the funeral procession. Mirwaiz Muhammad Yusuf Shah had declared that “the martyrs will be carried in a procession and will be buried with all honour, dignity and pomp and show.”⁸⁹ Subsequently, the government allowed eight persons to accompany each bier. However, when the funeral march started, people in thousands joined and turned it into “a procession unprecedented in the history of Kashmir.”⁹⁰ The dead were laid to rest in the compound of the Naqshband Sahib shrine. Following the example of the martyrs of the Battle of Uhad, two martyrs were buried in each grave.⁹¹

Within hours of bloodshed at the Central Jail and the arrest of leaders of the Muslim community, a reign of oppression was let loose on Kashmir’s majority community. As martial law was imposed, the city of Srinagar, towns and suburbs were handed over to the army, and the Dogra soldiers terrorized innocent people.⁹² The government made mass arrests, and in areas where Muslims were in minority, ruffians were encouraged by the police to attack houses belonging to Muslims, loot their property and dishonour the inmates.⁹³ In this situation of terror and grief the unfortunate aspect was the part played by the members of the Kashmiri Pandit community who openly sided with the government. It made the majority community believe that besides the government, non-Muslims were also pitched against them.⁹⁴ The pro-tyranny behaviour of the Pandits dismayed the suffering Muslim majority, and the leader of the movement, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, who has gone down in history as the appeaser of the Pandits at the cost of Muslim interests, was forced to request them to at least sit on the fence in the battle between the oppressor and the oppressed if they did not want to side with the latter.⁹⁵ Professor Khan recalls the situation thus:

An unhealthy development was the part played by the non-Muslims in general and the Kashmiri Pandits in particular who identified themselves with the Government and the armed forces. In the performance of their duties, the soldiers were, from time to time, guided and accompanied by the non-Muslims. The Muslims were subjected to every kind of humiliation.

Not only the active participants in the agitation but also those Muslims who had remained unconnected with it, were made to suffer the consequences. Indiscriminate arrests and house-searches were made by the military and the police. The Muslims in streets were ordered to crawl on the road. Military parades in the city created an atmosphere of awe and terror. The Muslims, both high and low, were asked to shout "Maharaja-ki-jai" [Victory be to the ruler] and compelled to salute the state flag by bowing before it. Those who disobeyed were first beaten and then sent to the police station. Muslim passengers in buses were thoroughly searched but Hindu passengers were exempted from such searches. The Muslims came to be looked upon as criminals. Thus the policy of repression was pursued vigorously.⁹⁶

The disturbances saw Prime Minister G. E. C. Wakefield being replaced by a Kashmiri Pandit, Raja Hari Kishen Koul. Wakefield was victim of a vicious campaign launched by one of Hari Singh's Kashmiri Pandit minister, P. K. Watal. Wakefield was accused of being anti-Hindu, pro-Muslim and cause of the Muslim agitation against the Hindu Maharaja.⁹⁷ Watal, who was himself eyeing the post of prime minister, used his influence with the Lahore-based newspapers such as the *Pratap*, the *Milap* and the *Tribune*, owned by some influential Hindus, to malign Wakefield.⁹⁸ These newspapers launched a vicious campaign against the prime minister. The agitation launched by the majority community for accord of minimum basic rights was sought to be discredited as a communal disturbance and its leaders maligned as communalists. The case against Wakefield was built on frivolous and laughable allegations, one of which was that he was pro-Muslim. Hari Singh's ears were poisoned against Wakefield who ultimately dismissed him but in the process also sacked Watal and appointed Koul as his prime minister.

In the appointment of Hari Kishen Koul as prime minister, Kashmiri Pandits felt more obliged than before to side with the autocratic dispensation. It was said about Koul that in him, Machiavelli and Kautilya were combined.⁹⁹ When some Muslims wanted to call on the Maharaja to acquaint him with the problems of their community, Koul reportedly intercepted them and bragged, "You do not know

of a Government scholarship of Rs. 30/- P. M. Was appointed as Science Master on Rs. 60/- P. M. in the Government High School Srinagar. Started a campaign of vilification against the administration of Khan Bahadur Aga Syed Hussain, late Minister-in-Charge Education in conjunction with Kh. Ghulam Ahmad Ashai, late Inspector for Mohammadan Education who had been prematurely retired from service on account of his bad conduct and corruption. Began to contribute pernicious articles to Muslim Vernacular newspapers particularly "Inqilab" and "Kashmir Musalman" against Government. After the alleged incident to the Holy Quran at Jammu he began to put up red ink posters of inflammatory character in the city to arouse the feelings of Mohammadans and incite them to action. He was finally dismissed by the Director of Education for taking part in political agitation against the Government in contravention of Government Servants Conduct Rules. His grandfather Sidiq Sheikh worked in a Manufactory on a daily wage of -/2/6 and acted as standard bearer of the rioters in the Rafiz loot in Sambat 1929. Prior to this date the family worked as Fishermen. Has been delivering seditious speeches in mosques and exciting people to violence.¹⁰⁶

A wealthy Hindu politician of Kashmiri Pandit origin and Member, Legislative Assembly of Punjab, Raja Narinder Nath, threatened that the Muslim agitation for Kashmir would have serious consequences for Muslim rulers of the princely states where Hindu subjects would make their lives hell.¹⁰⁷ The right wing Hindu leaders such as Balakrishna Shivram Moonje and Vijaya Raghuacharya too threatened revenge actions by Hindus against Muslim rulers of Hyderabad and Bhopal.¹⁰⁸ On 18 August 1931, Hindus and Sikhs held a massive public meeting at Pari Mahal, Lahore, in support of the Maharaja of Kashmir.¹⁰⁹ The All India Gorkha League also pledged support to Hari Singh and offered its services "for any duty."¹¹⁰

The Muslims of Punjab too were restive over the situation in Kashmir. On 14 August 1931, a mammoth public meeting, held at Mochi Darwaza, Lahore, was presided over by poet, philosopher Sir Muhammad Iqbal. The event was part of the Kashmir Day observed by Muslims in many cities of the British India to express solidarity

with their Kashmiri brethren. In his address to the gathering of over 50,000,¹¹¹ Iqbal said:

It is wrong to say that there is Hindu-Muslim turbulence in Kashmir. This is only the propaganda of Hindu newspapers. A *raja* or *nawab* can rule only by earning goodwill and acceptance of his subjects without which he cannot claim to be a ruler. Same is the case with the Maharaja of Kashmir. If he continues with his present actions the day is not too far when the arrogant Government of Kashmir will meet its destruction.... You are aware that for the past two months the people of Kashmir are facing severe trouble. For over a century, the population there is facing continued and uninterrupted oppression due to a violent policy [of the Government]. Finally, the patience has ended which has resulted in the present situation. In view of the tyrannical policies of the Government, the people of Kashmir were terrified. Even animals are not ill-treated the way the Government treated its poor and unarmed Muslim subjects.... The religious sermons in mosques have been banned. Today, God has caused heat and passion in the blood of Muslims to face the falsehood till the restrictions put on their religious freedom are not lifted. To achieve this they will feel blessed to shed the last drop of their blood under the swords of the Government. We called Kashmiris as timid but these very timid people have taken bullets of an oppressor Government on their chests. This is providential strength and religious honour that an unarmed people like the Kashmiris has today stood up before the falsehood. Those who saw the dead and the injured in the hospital have said that none of these sons of the faith had a bullet mark on his back.... Today, the Hindu Press is labelling the genuine demands of the Muslims as an outside [sponsored] agitation but I would say if the Muslims demand from the Government their rights under the outside influence then under whose influence are the Hindus [in British India] targeting senior officers of the Government and raising memorials in memory of those who were hanged for their actions. Were they not rebels for declaring an open war with the Government? The Hindu Press is eloquent in their praise and terming the Government justice as violence. The Hindu Press says that we want to

establish an Islamic State in Kashmir. This is absolutely incorrect and unfounded. We want justice. Muslims of Kashmir should be given their rights. The restrictions on their religious freedom should be lifted. Their rights should be recognised in the manner the Hindus have been given their rights in Muslim [princely] states.¹¹²

Iqbal was not alone in criticizing the Dogra oppression and the negative role of the Hindu Press in reporting events in Kashmir. Veteran leader of the Indian National Congress, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, who, on the invitation of the Maharaja was in Kashmir around this time, was shocked at the popular uprising being painted as "the conflict between the Hindus and the Muslims."¹¹³ Azad issued a long press statement in which he said:

It appears that the real facts are not made known to the Maharaja and orders are taken from him after misrepresentation of facts; and the whole responsibility for this rests upon the present Ministers who are not the real well-wishers of the Maharaja. This is the reason that the political atmosphere in India has become disturbed by the events in Kashmir.... In view of the shooting of the unarmed Muslims who have been martyred on wrongly acquired orders, it is certain that this episode will have a very deep effect on the Indian Muslims and the Muslim element in the Congress may turn hostile to it. The people interested in such suits [Abdu Qadeer's trial] attend in thousands the court-rooms in India and in the Punjab so that they may hear the proceedings of a political trial. But this necessity has never been felt that they may be shot dead. I have learnt that the non-Muslims comprise a majority of the C. I. D. staff in the State and that they present to the Government the distorted version of the speeches delivered by the Muslims.¹¹⁴

The Congress leader advised the Maharaja's government to use wisdom, assuage the feelings of the Muslims and listen to their grievances. He warned that if it did not act wisely, the government would soon land itself in trouble. Azad felt sad on attempts by the Press to present the genuine demands of Kashmiri Muslims as a Hindu-Muslim feud and said:

I am also grieved to see that the matter involved only the State and its Muslim subjects but the Hindu press presents it as a dispute between the Hindus and the Muslims.... Though the fact is only confined to the oppression exercised by the Government on the Muslim subjects in connection with the hearing of the trial of one Abdul Qadeer of Allahabad, but even the name of it does not figure anywhere and in all press and publications it is being shown that the root of all this trouble is the conflict between the Hindus and the Muslims. I have heard all the facts and have arrived at the conclusion that excesses have been committed by the Government in every respect.¹¹⁵

The Hindu Press spread unfounded and maligning rumours against Muslim leaders who supported Kashmiri Muslims.¹¹⁶ Dr Muhammad Iqbal raised funds for the help of the oppressed Kashmiris and sent some of his prominent lawyer acquaintances to Kashmir for legal assistance of the victims, but they were either pushed back or not allowed to enter the state by the Maharaja's government.¹¹⁷ Iqbal's open support for Kashmiri Muslims and his criticism of Hari Singh's government did not go well with the Maharaja's supporters amongst his subjects and the Hindu Press outside Kashmir. He became the target of slander and rumours. *Kaisri* claimed that Iqbal wanted to become the prime minister of Kashmir.¹¹⁸ The *Tribune* in its issue of 26 August 1931 published an article by G. S. Raghavan in which it was alleged that a prominent leader of British India had applied for a post in the Kashmir Government.¹¹⁹ The allegation was a calculated mischief as it came close on the heels of the publication of the rumour about Iqbal in the *Kaisri*. When Iqbal's attention was drawn towards this rumour at a public meeting held on Kashmir Day on 14 August 1931 at Lahore, he mocked at it by exclaiming, "Mai aise haakim ki wazarat pe la'anat bhejta hun [I imprecate the ministry of such a ruler]."¹²⁰ About the *Tribune* allegation, Iqbal told the editor of *Inqilab*, Abdul Majid Saalik,

I cannot say who is meant [by the reference in the *Tribune*] but since a Hindu newspaper has already named me and it is possible somebody will be misled by Raghvan's words, so I vehemently refute this rumour. I had categorically said at the Kashmir Day public meeting that I imprecate such a ministry. I have never

applied even for positions higher than this ministry. Moreover, I am a Member of the Kashmir Committee which wants reforms in the system of governance in Kashmir. Being a Member of this Committee, I consider it dishonesty and betrayal of trust to do such a thing.¹²¹

On the one hand, Iqbal was accused of eying the prime minister's post under Hari Singh and on the other, he was alleged to be conspiring to overthrow him as the ruler of Kashmir. A Kashmiri Pandit 'journalist' by the name of Gwasha Lal, BA, deposed against Iqbal before the Riots Enquiry Committee constituted by the Kashmir Government to inquire into the allegations of communal riots following the 13 July incident. He fabricated a story about Iqbal instigating people to overthrow Hari Singh. Lal's alleged statement was widely circulated by the Hindu Press in which he was quoted as having said that he had gone to the residence of Dr Iqbal where several suggestions to overthrow the Kashmir Government were discussed.¹²² A Lahore-based newspaper published the alleged contents of the meeting of Lal with Iqbal under the caption: "Dr. Iqbal's Mansion: A hub of Conspiracy—How a plot was hatched at Lahore against Kashmir Government." The narration read:

Journalist Mr. Gwasha Lal, BA has revealed before the Kashmir Enquiry Committee a very dangerous conspiracy to overthrow the Kashmir Government wherein he said, "I had gone to Lahore to attend the meeting of the Kashmir Committee. [I] attended the public meeting. After that I was taken to the office of the Inqilab newspaper. There, I met Mr. Saalik. Then we went to the residence of Dr. Iqbal where suggestions to overthrow the Kashmir Government were discussed." Our reporter has narrated the meeting as a dialogue in the following words:

Kashmiri Muslim: Maulana Saalik Sahab, Mr. Gwasha Lal is a staunch opponent of the Dogra Government. He is very sympathetic towards our movement.

Maulana Saalik: That is very good. Have you not heard [the adage] that an insider who knows all the secrets can bring down Lanka [a prosperous city in Hindu mythology]. Mr. Gwasha Lal's participation is God's help.

Gwasha Lal: I am a small person who knows his worth.

Maulana: No Pandit Sahab. You are being modest. Your participation will greatly strengthen our cause. We can openly say that neither Hindus nor Muslims are happy with Hari Singh's government.

Mr. Saalik: [Taking the Kashmiri Muslim aside] Can we trust this Kashmiri *patha* [youth]?

Kashmiri Muslim: Hundred percent. He is our tested man and nothing is hidden from him.

Maulana Saalik: [Returning to his earlier place] Alright Pandit Sahab. Since the matter is very important we must go to Dr. Iqbal's residence for consultation.

Mr. Gwasha Lal: Let us go. What could be my objection? Moreover, this will also provide an opportunity for me to see Doctor Sahab.

Dr. Iqbal: Welcome Saalik Sahab. Like the *Eid* crescent you are rarely seen now.

Saalik Sahab: What should I say, Dr. Sahab? I am single-handed shouldering responsibilities of a daily newspaper. There is no escape from problems and worries. But leave that. I have brought Pandit Gwasha Lal to introduce to you.

Dr. Iqbal: Is he the same Pandit Gwasha Lal who is author of A Short History of Kashmir?

Gaasha Lal: Yes, I am the author of that book.

Dr. Iqbal: It is my good fortune that I got to see you.

Pandit [Gwasha Lal]: Dr. Sahab you are embarrassing me. I am one of your admirers and want to talk about the conspiracy about Kashmir ...

Dr. Iqbal: [Boggled] Conspiracy?

Kashmiri Muslim: Dr. Sahab, don't worry. He belongs to our party. Nothing is hidden from him.

Dr. Iqbal: [Smiling] O.K. If you take the responsibility I need not reassure myself.^[23]

In the alleged dialogue, Dr Iqbal was accused of advocating public disorder in the state at such a scale that it would lead to rebellion. The vilification of Dr Iqbal was an attempt to discredit the most influential pro-Kashmiri voice in British India. Abdul Majid Saalik who was quoted in the deposition as having escorted Gwasha Lal to Dr Iqbal's residence vehemently refuted the allegation. In a press statement the editor of *Inqilab* said:

During the days of the [Kashmir] Conference a young Kashmiri Pandit, whose name I cannot recall, visited the *Inqilab* office along with some workers from Jammu. The workers told about him that he was pro-Kashmiri people and strongly against the oppression of the Dogra rule. Since the friends from Jammu were eager to meet the *Allama* [Iqbal] and since this Hindu youth also expressed his desire [to see him] I took all of them to him. There, issues pertaining to Kashmir were discussed but to say that the *Allama* advocated public disorder and rebellion is dishonesty and mischief of the extreme order. On the contrary, he said that the Dogras have no reason to start a movement in Kashmir as they have their own government there. As regards Kashmir Pandits and the Muslims they should foster unity and fight for their rights so that the matter remains between the ruler and his subjects and nobody gets an opportunity to make it a Hindu-Muslim issue. Beyond this, whatever has been said is absolute lie.¹²⁴

Gwasha Lal was a small time journalist who later joined the Radio Kashmir. He was politically active during the 1930s, sending letters and articles to the Hindu Press in the Punjab about the Hindu perspective of the Kashmir situation. Years later he wrote a book, *Kashmir through the Ages*, which he subsequently republished under the title *Kashmir Then and Now*. The book is the least quoted work on Kashmir history. During the recording of witnesses by the Riots Enquiry Committee, a witness, Abdul Majid, described Gwasha Lal as "riyakaar" (a hypocrite) and being on the payroll of Thakur Kartar Singh, a minister in the Kashmir Government.¹²⁵ Majid stated that Gwasha Lal had himself confided in him about receiving money from Singh. The witness accused Singh of conspiring against the Muslims.¹²⁶

That Gwasha Lal Koul did not carry any impeccable credentials was confirmed by a report of Maharaja Hari Singh's own government. The report on the classification of the *Kashmir Times*, a newspaper that he co-edited with Baldev Prashad Sharma, hints at Koul's being on the payroll of one or the other minister and sending to newspapers in Punjab partisan accounts of happenings in Kashmir. The report reads:

Pandit Gwasha Lal Koul is a graduate. He began his career as a contributor to some third-rate newspapers of the Punjab and elsewhere. He attempted several times to get Government service, but did not succeed. He was for some time connected with a Delhi Weekly devoted to the cause of State's people. Later he joined a paper issued from Beawar (Ajmer). He also wrote what he calls a brief history of Kashmir. He made a sensational statement before the Riots Enquiry Committee of 1931. He was a busy-body during the time of Messers Wakefield and Wattal, and was believed to be in the pay of one or the other Minister of the time. He did not succeed in his efforts to obtain Government service. He was the chief publicity officer of the Sanatan Dharma Youngmen's Association during the so-called bread movement of May 1932. For sending partisan accounts of the happenings in Kashmir during the movement, he had to sever his connection with the A. P. I. whose Kashmir correspondent he was. Before 1932 he used to appear on Kashmiri Pandit platforms. Since then his activities have been confined to his paper (the *Kashmir Times*).¹²⁷

Although the government had classified the *Kashmir Times* in the 'A' category, it viewed the newspaper as "a moderate Hindu paper but is not free from communal bias" and "never tired of criticising the Glancy Commission Report." Importantly, the official report described the *Kashmir Times* as "opposed to the setting up of a responsible government in the State" and not approving the ongoing political movement.¹²⁸

The allegations against Iqbal of conspiring to overthrow the Maharaja and also aspiring to become the prime minister of Kashmir were attempts at vilification to discredit the most influential pro-Kashmiri Muslim voice in British India. The active participation

of a person of the eminence of Iqbal in raising voice against the atrocities perpetrated on Kashmir's majority community and denial of even the minimum basic rights to them made the Dogra ruler and his supporters among his Hindu subjects very uncomfortable. The Kashmiri Brahmins whom he had eulogized in his poetry, particularly did not take his support for Kashmiri Muslims kindly. They were in the vanguard of Hari Singh's support system. It is not surprising then that a poet and philosopher whose fame transcended geographical boundaries, who came from the same Kashmiri Brahman stock as them and who paid the highest compliment to them through his verses was altogether ignored by the Kashmiri Pandit scholars and writers, many of whom were well versant with Persian and Urdu, the languages of Iqbal's poetry.¹²⁹ In fact, some of the community members even maligned him. Besides Gwasha Lal Koul who levelled the allegation of conspiracy for overthrowing of the government against Iqbal, another Pandit historian, R. K. Parimu, tried to scandalize his ancestry by identifying an alleged embezzler Hindu revenue official during the Afghan regime as grandfather of Iqbal. The linkage is the worst intellectual dishonesty.

Parimu claims that in 1939–40 he came across a paper in the Persian documents of the State Archives according to which one Sahaz Ram Sapru who was in charge of revenue of Kashmir during the regime of Azim Khan had held the revenue in arrears and spent the money on his personal expenses including marriages in the family. When the embezzlement was discovered, Sahaz Ram was offered death or Islam as penalty. The Pandit, according to Parimu, accepted Islam but at the same time requested that as Muslim he would not like to live in Kashmir, upon which he was allowed to settle in Sialkot. Just because the alleged embezzler had migrated to Sialkot, where Iqbal's ancestors had shifted from Kashmir long after converting to Islam, Parimu is "inclined to identify this Sahaz Ram with Sahaz Ram Sapru, the Pandit grandfather of Sir Muhammad Iqbal."¹³⁰ He quotes Hassan Khoihami, a 19th century Kashmiri historian, to observe that Azim Khan had sent Sahaz Sapru to Kabul to escort his wealth and family in 1818–19 and concludes that may be from Kabul the Pandit went to Sialkot. Parimu's 'research' has found way in the works of some other writers, notably Khushwant Singh, who reproduced the embezzlement

story but with a changed name of the alleged grandfather.¹³¹ Parimu's mischief is a poor attempt at twisting history. He identifies the accused revenue collector under Azim Khan's governorship as Sahaz Ram Sapru when the official's name was Sahaj Ram Dhar, as recorded by Hassan whom Parimu summons as his evidence.¹³² Hassan's Sahaj Ram Dhar was *Madarulmiham* of Governor Azim Khan who was sent by the latter to Kabul with his fortune and family when he was recalled by his minister brother Wazir Muhammad Khan, to assist him in the discharge of his duties as a minister after he had lost eyesight.¹³³ None of the index registers of the Persian record in the State Archives Department mentions the purported paper mentioned by Parimu and all efforts to locate it among the Persian documents failed. Iqbal's grandfather's name, it may be recalled, was Sheikh Muhammad Rafiq, not Sahaz Ram Sapru. The family had converted to Islam about 450 years before Iqbal's birth.¹³⁴

Gwasha Lal was not the only Kashmiri Pandit to make funny allegations before the Riots Enquiry Committee. Pandit Dina Nath told the Committee that on 13 July, he saw Prime Minister Wakefield at the Maharajgunj market along with Khawaja Sa'duddin when a bare-headed Muslim came running and handed over a letter to the latter. Sa'duddin allegedly passed the letter on to Wakefield and smilingly whispered something into the ear of the bare-headed Muslim who ran towards the river shouting, "Muslims! Do not fear army, police or anybody. Mr. Wakefield has told them not to touch any Muslim and also instructed all Muslims to assemble at the Jama Masjid tomorrow where Mr. [Sheikh Mohammad] Abdullah will deliver a secret message to them."¹³⁵ A secret message to be delivered at a congregation!

Pandit Dina Nath, according to his own admission, was a member of the secret police and used a Muslim name, Bashir Ahmad, to send his secret reports.¹³⁶ Nath's statement was a hotchpotch of his weird views. He cited first among many of the causes of the Muslim agitation the premature retirement of Assistant Inspector of Schools Ghulam Ahmad Ashai. His another 'revelation' was that while Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was studying at the Aligarh Muslim University, it occurred to him that a conspiracy should be hatched to set up a Muslim Government in Kashmir.¹³⁷ For Nath, Wakefield was always acting on anti-Hindu policy. One of his grouse against

the Prime Minister was that he had appointed as his private secretary Ram Chandra Kak who had scripted a film in which Kashmiri Pandits were shown in a bad light. He claimed that when after the alleged loot of the Hindu shopkeepers Wakefield visited the city, he told the victims to go to hell and that he cannot do anything for them. Nath alleged that he saw Wakefield distributing money among Muslims and directing them to wire their grievances to the Maharaja. He claimed that he had inputs on the 13 July attack on the Srinagar Jail and the consequent disturbances and had sent secret reports under the assumed name of Bashir Ahmad.¹³⁸ Interestingly, the Central Jail as the venue of the hearing of the accused Abdul Qadeer Khan on 13 July was a last-minute decision, yet the attack on it was foretold by this gentleman! Nath also sent secret reports against his Muslim colleagues including Inspector Abdul Qadeer and Sub-inspector Habibullah accusing them of “corroborating with the conspirators.”¹³⁹

As the Muslim majority was mourning their dead and nursing the wounds of their injured, they were in for outlandish allegations by the Maharaja’s co-religionist subjects. The allegations were amplified by the Hindu Press. The Muslims were accused of indulging in loot and arson against the Hindus and their forcible conversion as also shaving their tufts. The *Milap* wrote that “the Hindus were converted [to Islam]. They were forced to read the *kalima* and their tufts were shaved.”¹⁴⁰ The newspaper also alleged molestation and murder of an un-named Hindu girl. The allegations of looting Hindu houses were made before the Riots Enquiry Committee also. However, the allegations were torn into pieces after the reality came to the fore. It turned out that most of the goods about whose theft allegations were levelled against Muslims were recovered from the premises of the complainants themselves and, in many cases, goods stolen from Muslim houses were allegedly also recovered from there. An article published in the Amritsar-based Kashmir titled, “Lootmaar ki haqeeqat” (The reality of the loot) did the post-mortem of the allegations thus:

The Hindu newspapers are vigorously making the propaganda that countless Hindu houses were looted during the recent disturbances but the fact is that not a single Hindu was put to loss. On the contrary, the Hindus joined with police and the army caused searches of *ba-pardah* [modest] Muslim households

and stole their belongings. Earlier, lot of things belonging to Muslims were recovered from the Dogra army stationed at Badami Bagh. But forced by the efforts of some Muslims, searches were started in the houses of Hindus on August 2 and most of the things whose theft had been attributed to Muslims were recovered. Lot of things that they had stolen from their Muslim neighbours were also recovered. At Bohri Kadal alone, during searches such goods were recovered from the houses of four Hindus. From Mohalla Wazepora stolen goods were recovered from the house of a Hindu which he was hiding under his clothes. From the house of a Punjabi *khatri* at Maharajgunj stolen goods worth thousands of rupees, blood soaked clothes and a turban of a Muslim were recovered which leads one to assume that Muslims were not only looted but also martyred by the Hindus. Likewise, stolen goods and a blood stained gunny bag was recovered from the house of one Bhagat at Maharajgunj. Given these incidents, Hindu newspapers and Kashmiri Pandits by making hue and cry are trying to pull wool on the eyes of the world.¹⁴¹

An incident of much ado about nothing with regard to the allegations of loot of Hindu houses by the Muslims was reported in the Press. A minister in the Kashmir Government, Khan Bahadur Aga Syed Hussain, purchased a costly roll of cloth and called some Hindus of Maharajgunj. He took them to a separate room one by one and enquired from them if they knew to whom the roll of cloth belonged. Each one of them said it was his. "He informed the police on telephone and later apprised the Maharaja about the incident, wondering if this did not establish that these people were wrongly implicating innocent and poor Muslims."¹⁴²

The *Inqilab* published several instances of allegations of loot made by the Hindus and the allegedly stolen goods recovered from the possession of the complainants themselves. In one instance, a cloth merchant namely Durga Dass lodged a complaint that his goods worth ₹30,000 had been stolen. On the report of an informer, his premises were searched and the allegedly stolen goods were recovered from there.¹⁴³ Another instance was of one Pandit Shiv Ram who alleged that he had suffered a loss of ₹9,000 and had been rendered destitute. During the search of his house, goods worth ₹6,000 were

recovered.¹⁴⁴ In yet another case of alleged loot, the ‘stolen’ goods were recovered from the false ceiling in the attic of the house of Shiv Ram, the complainant. Some labourers reportedly disclosed that the person had paid them ₹2 each to dump his goods in the house.¹⁴⁵ Similar incidents of ‘owner turning out to be thief’ involved individuals named Bagla, Kanjad Ram, Sankar Joo and Dina Nath.¹⁴⁶ At Maharajgunj, when the Hindu houses were being searched, someone threw on the road a *daigchi* (cauldron) and another person a bicycle stolen from a Muslim household and a Muslim iron smith, respectively.¹⁴⁷ From the house of a Pandit, several rolls of stolen cloth were recovered.¹⁴⁸

Not only did the Hindu Press denigrate the Kashmiri Muslims, their leadership and their movement for basic rights but also openly advocated boycott of Kashmiri goods to “teach them a lesson” for rising against their Hindu ruler. In an edit-page article, “Boycott of Kashmiri Goods,” the founder editor of the *Milap*, Mahashay Khushal Chand, wrote:

I have earlier also written that the Hindus do not like fighting and disturbance. They are peace loving and want to live their lives calmly but if they are compelled to do so then they know how to teach others a lesson even by themselves undergoing hardship. If the Muslims, both Kashmiri and outside, do not correct their course and stop activities against the Kashmir State and the Hindus then to teach a lesson only to Kashmiri Muslims the Hindus will use that silent weapon which they used against Lancashire and Manchester. By boycotting the cloth from Lancashire and Manchester it was made known how the boycott can have far-reaching consequences. Today, the Grand English nation is shaken by this boycott and the people of Lancashire are lamenting that the Indians have rendered them impoverished. The Kashmiri Muslims better consider the consequences of a similar silent weapon being used against their goods.¹⁴⁹

Chand wrote that the newspaper had received information that some Hindus of the Yuvak Sabha have decided to picket at the shops selling Kashmiri woollens, silk and wooden furniture and would not allow sale worth even a penny. He warned that if the Muslim agitation (in Kashmir) continued, then the picketing might not be stopped for

long from taking place. He also advised caution to shopkeepers selling Kashmiri goods lest they suffer losses later. For Kashmiri Muslims, he flagged non-participation in the ‘conspiracy against the Maharaja and the Hindus’ as the only means of their safety, which, he warned, they could ignore at their own peril.¹⁵⁰ The *Milap* also literally ‘beat its chest’ on the release of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and other leaders who had been arrested in the aftermath of the 13 July incident. To attract the attention of the Government and the Hindus of the State and India, the newspaper lamented that nobody paid any heed to its reporter’s ‘cries’. It warned that if steps were not taken now “the Hindu Government would be finished and the Hindus will either leave Kashmir or die there.”¹⁵¹ “If the Hindus of India do not come to the rescue of the Hindus of Kashmir it would not be long before the Hindu State and its Hindus are lost,”¹⁵² the newspaper added.

The Hindu Press raised a hue and cry against the reporting of the situation and affairs of Kashmir by the Muslim Press and accused it of fomenting trouble and hatred against the Hindu ruler and his coreligionist subjects. Several newspapers like the *Inqilab* run by Muslims were proscribed by the Kashmir Government. Newspapers such as the *Statesman* and the *Civil and Military Gazette* run by non-Muslims but which reported the Kashmir situation with some fairness were also criticized and the Government in Punjab was asked to take notice of their reporting. In the Punjab Assembly, one Member, S. C. Mitr, asked the Government if it had sought opinion of its legal advisor on reports and articles published in *Statesman* on internal administration of Kashmir, and if these articles spread hatred against the Kashmir Government.¹⁵³ His colleague in the Assembly, B. R. Puri, also demanded action against Muslims of British India for ‘maligning the Maharaja of Kashmir’ and demanded of the Government of India to invoke the Princes Protection Act against these Muslims.¹⁵⁴ The Hindus of Lahore also demanded use of this act for the protection of the ruler of Kashmir.¹⁵⁵

All this hysteria was created outside Kashmir to deny the Muslim majority the basic human rights which they sought from their ruler. The Kashmir Conference held at Shimla spelt out its objectives to bring pressure upon the Government of India to help Kashmiris in securing elementary rights of humanity hitherto denied to them, to

acquaint the ruler with the real affairs of his State, ask for an appointment of independent commission of inquiry into the Kashmir affairs, seek a new interpretation of the Treaty of Amritsar which had deprived Kashmiris of their proprietary rights in the State (The Kashmir Committee wanted to put this demand before the British Parliament) and make the Kashmir affairs known to the entire civilized world by writing and widely circulating books on Kashmir in England.¹⁵⁶ The Kashmir Committee tried to open a dialogue with the Maharaja and send a deputation to Srinagar which he did not agree to. Dismayed by his response, the Committee, in order to create awareness among the Muslims of India about the state of affairs in Kashmir, decided to observe 14 August as the Kashmir Day.¹⁵⁷

The allegations of loot of Hindu properties by Muslims did not have any respect for facts. While for some the “Khatri traders of Mahrajgunj were looted by crores [of rupees],”¹⁵⁸ for others the “Hindu merchants lost lakhs worth of goods.”¹⁵⁹ The allegations were initially restricted to the Mahrajgunj market but in the subsequent years, it assumed sinister narration when after the migration in 1990, members of the Kashmiri Pandit community alleged loot and arson of their properties in large proportion on 13 July 1931. That the alleged incidents against Kashmiri Pandits were a later addition is proved by an article published in the *Guru Ghantal* in which only Mahrajgunj was mentioned as a place of loot. As we have observed earlier, the Riots Enquiry Commission too did not come up with any convincing evidence to establish loot of the Pandit properties. Many Kashmiri Pandits wrote books on Kashmir history discussing in detail the 1931 incident, but none of these speak about loot of Pandit houses and property by ‘Muslim rioters’. A Kashmiri Pandit journalist turned historian, Gwasha Lal Koul, who along with other Pandits “wrote extensively to outside papers and issued hand written and sometimes cyclostyled posters”¹⁶⁰ during that period, does not mention loot of Pandit properties in his book, *Kashmir Then and Now (5000 BC to 1972 AD)*. Koul was an active member of the Pandit community when the 13 July incident happened. He claims to have been himself “victim of mob fury two days later”¹⁶¹ when he was on a round, but he does not refer to any loot of Kashmiri Pandit houses, save mentioning in general terms that “there was loot and arson”¹⁶²

[in the city]. More importantly, Jia Lal Kilam, a prominent Pandit leader of that period, who wrote *A History of Kashmiri Pandits*¹⁶³ in 1955, 24 years after the 13 July 1931 incident, too does not mention loot of or attack on the Pandit properties. Dr Showkat Hussain who regularly writes on Kashmir history, holds the view that “there was no communal violence [but] only demonstrations against the State and minor stoning of some shops of *Khatri*s in Mahrajgunj to enforce *hartal* after the firing incident outside the Central Jail.”¹⁶⁴ Abdul Majid Zargar elaborates:

Not a single Kashmiri Pandit was touched, leave alone harmed or killed. The falsehood of the narrative now put forward by few Pandits can be gauged from the fact that it has been manufactured and made current since 1990, i.e., after a lapse of nearly 60 years. They need to be countered by telling to disclose identities of those killed or harmed. If such things had happened, its mention would be found in documents like FIRs, complaints etc. Many books have been written by Pandits between 1931 and 1947 which do not find a mention of any large scale riots or killings on that day.¹⁶⁵

Following their migration in 1990, some leaders of the Kashmiri Pandits added to their stories of alleged oppression at the hands of Kashmiri Muslims, tales of ‘massive loot and plunder of their properties and rape and murder of Pandit women in 1931.’ As a result, a ‘fracas’ between the aggrieved Muslim mourners and pro-Maharaja non-Kashmiri Hindu traders at Mahrajgunj and ‘loot’ of few of their shops was sought to be converted into ‘large scale looting, rape, arson and killing of Kashmiri Pandits’. The unsubstantiated and propagandist allegations were circulated to present 13 July 1931 as ‘The Black Day’ instead of ‘The Martyrs’ Day’ as the Muslims observe it. In doing so, facts were twisted in such a manner so as to present the victims of police firing at the Central Jail Srinagar as ‘criminals’ attacking Kashmiri Pandits and getting killed in the process. Sushil Pandit, while making ‘four non-negotiable demands’—‘expulsion of Kashmiri Pandits from Kashmir as genocide’, ‘delivering justice by genocide trials in a tribunal’, ‘settling of all Kashmiri Pandits in Kashmir under Indian laws’ and ‘reaffirming the accession of Kashmir

to India as final and irrevocable', has this fantastic story to tell about the 13 July incident:

July 13 is an important date in Kashmir. In 1931, on this day in Srinagar, and later on for months elsewhere too, the first ever organised communal carnage in the recorded history of modern Kashmir took place. Hundreds were murdered, burnt alive, tossed into the river, maimed, molested, raped, robbed and even forcibly converted to Islam. When the rioters were challenged and sought to be controlled by the police, a few of them died. The dead rioters were hailed as martyrs by their cohorts. It was only later, in independent India no less, that the state government of Jammu and Kashmir formally sanctified those criminals and decided to commemorate the dead rioters as fallen heroes, every year on July 13.¹⁶⁶

Following the imposition of martial law, a reign of terror was let loose on the majority community. Prime Minister Hari Kishen Koul, drunken with power, bragged that he would suppress the Muslim agitation within three months when a deputation called on him to seek an end to oppression of the Muslim subjects. He hurled abuses at the deputation and shouted at its leader, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, "You are a big *badmash*. You don't give up your mischievous activities. You are talking non-sense. We will teach your people a lesson because you do not give up your mean activities."¹⁶⁷ When Abdullah reacted angrily and told Koul that his actions would result in very serious consequences for his Government if it again sought to shed the blood of Muslims, he interrupted him and, burning with rage, yelled: "You are a mean fellow. I order your arrest here and now and I will see what grief you and your community can cause me or the Government."¹⁶⁸ Abdullah was arrested and again sent to the Badamibagh Cantonment where from he had been released earlier. The situation as it obtained after the repressive measures of the Kashmir Government could well be gauged by the following excerpt from a memorandum later presented by Muslims to the Maharaja:

Some constables of the Training School who were coming towards the city in a lorry, attacked innocent and peaceful Muslim passers-by inflicting death on some and injuries on

some others ... one or two severely injured persons were being removed from the Central jail to a private hospital of Doctor Abdul Ahad and were attacked in the way; the injured were also beaten and succumbed to their injuries.... With the promulgation of Martial Law, army wrought havoc on the Muslims on the instigation of Hindus; the passers-by were murdered, peaceful citizens were forcibly brought out of their homes and tortured and arrested; nothing was left undone to disgrace, dishonour and destroy Muslim homes; women were assaulted and outraged; small children were not only beaten but also killed so much so that the statement of a non-Muslim woman throws considerable light on these incidents. Wherever it was possible, poor men and women were either drowned or strangulated; the dead bodies of the martyrs are still being recovered from the river. In Maharaj Gunj and Bohri Kadal conditions were so bad that for three days Muslim residents remained besieged in their homes without any means of subsistence. The havoc wrought between Habba Kadal and Safa Kadal is beyond description. Hindus served food and other delicious eatables to the army to keep them under their influence; in Maharaj Gunj, Domba Kadal, Nawab Bazar, Bateyar and Vichar Nag, many innocent Muslims were killed by the army in collaboration with local Hindus. Law and order did not exist even in its shadow nor did the officers care for the norms of law and justice; they acted like bigoted Hindus who seemed to have taken a vow to perpetrate oppression.¹⁶⁹

With Hari Kishen Koul at the helm of affairs, his coreligionists were more emboldened than ever to cause anguish to the majority community. On 18 August, a Muslim woman vegetable seller was "waylaid by Pandit boys at Khanqah-i-Sokhta, adjacent to the house of Pandit Shyam Lal. Her clothes were torn and she was left almost naked."¹⁷⁰ Earlier, a child was "beaten and wounded by Hindu hooligans"¹⁷¹ and a dead body of a Muslim woman was recovered from a river who was allegedly "drowned by soldiers, presumably after rape."¹⁷² In the meanwhile, Abdullah's re-arrest caused widespread resentment across cities and towns of Kashmir. The army arrested people on false charges, and arbitrarily convicted and punished them including by flogging in public at the Exhibition Grounds. At many

places peaceful and unarmed people were fired upon and killed in cold blood. On 22 September, amid complete *hartal*, people assembled at the Jama Masjid. The army opened fire, killing at least three persons on the spot and injuring many others.¹⁷³ According to a newspaper correspondent, the “mounted cavalry charged their beasts on the hundreds of Muslims who were outside the Mosque and when they ran for safety towards the prayer hall, the army opened fire killing four and wounding hundreds, fifteen of whom had serious injuries.”¹⁷⁴ Another eight persons were gunned down at Gaw Kadal when army opened fire at a procession and also seized the dead bodies. A person who was asleep in his shop was also shot dead.¹⁷⁵ On the same day, two more persons were killed at Maisuma.¹⁷⁶

A day later, on 23 September, at least 21 people including a 13-year-old boy, Ghulam Hussain Malik, were gunned down at Anantnag. Many more were wounded. A Kashmiri Pandit magistrate on duty, Raghunath Mattoo, believed to be up to a mischief, had the exit of the procession blocked and then ordered firing on people who wanted to disperse and go to their homes. Some people believed that Mattoo had planned a mass killing.¹⁷⁷ On 24 September, people took out a procession at Shopian demanding release of a Muslim *fakir* who had been arrested for raising ‘seditious slogans’. The police opened fire leading to a clash between the police and the agitators during which a policeman got killed. One can have the glimpse of the brutality with which the police and the army dealt with people in the town through the following passage by Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz:

Military men helped them [police] to take their revenge on the poor, defenceless and unarmed people. From all accounts, official and non-official, it can easily be gathered that there was no law in the town. A large number of people left the place or went into hiding. Those who remained behind had to attend the identification parades as the police was busy in investigating the cases of the riot and the murder of the police officer. While the villagers were thus engaged with the police, the chivalrous Rajput soldiers would roam about the town, enter their houses, loot them and abuse their womenfolk. Several cases of rape were reported to Mr. Middleton who himself admits grave suspicion about one having actually taken place. Shopkeepers

were first ordered to open their shops and were then arrested and taken to the thana [police station] for investigation. In their absence the shops were looted. Every torture against Muslims was perpetrated. People were beaten on the slightest pretext and made to stand up and salute every soldier or police official who passed through the streets and the lanes of the town.¹⁷⁸

As public anger against oppression spread across Kashmir, a panicked Maharaja issued an ordinance, 19-L, to quell it. The ordinance, which could be termed as the precursor of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), now in force in Kashmir, gave unlimited powers to the army which used these to take revenge on the people. Indiscriminate arrests, house searches, loot and molestation of women ensued. People were horrified at the sight of an approaching soldier. When four soldiers came to arrest a Muslim villager at Shopian, he jumped from the window and ran away. The soldiers questioned and harassed his wife who suffered nervous breakdown and died.¹⁷⁹ The atrocities, however, resulted in widespread anguish and anger against the Government.

On 24 September, Srinagar witnessed an unprecedented outburst against the Dogra tyranny when about 60,000 people gathered at Khanyar, a quarter of the city that houses one of the most revered Muslim shrines in Kashmir. All able-bodied Muslims were seen surging towards Khanyar with axes, spears, lances and match-lock rifles. In a significant development, Sayid Mirak Shah Kashani, a highly revered spiritual personality, came out from seclusion in Shalimar, mounted his horse with a naked sword in his hand and marched ahead of a large procession.¹⁸⁰ A showdown between a highly surcharged Muslim mass and the army was evident which could have resulted in mayhem. With large crowds of Muslims on the streets armed with crude weapons and no policeman out there, not a single Hindu man, woman or child was harmed by the mob.¹⁸¹ "On the other hand, there is reliable evidence to show that members of the mob furnished instances of great chivalry and real heroism in escorting some Hindu women. Muslims voluntarily accompanied the women to their homes."¹⁸² Faced with a serious situation, the Government quickly withdrew army from the city and Hari Singh sent a Muslim minister and some officials to pacify the highly excited crowd and invite a Muslim deputation. Thereupon, *Mirwaiz Molvi Muhammad*

Yusuf Shah, Saaduddin Shawl and Molvi Mohammad Abdullah had a meeting with the Maharaja during which Hari Singh blew hot and cold on the deputation, threatening to “skin you alive right now” for starting a revolt and, in the same breath, forgiving them, for “I am fully alive to the difficulties of my subjects; they are like my children. I will enquire into their grievances myself without any pressure and will address these but I wouldn’t allow anyone to instigate my subjects to rebellion.”¹⁸³

On 5 December 1931, Hari Singh appointed another commission under L. Middleton, a civil servant borrowed from the Government of India, to enquire into the violent incidents at Srinagar, Anantnag and Shopian. The Muslims did not attach much hope with the Commission that heard 384 witnesses in all. Middleton held government officials responsible for dereliction of duty but at the same time endorsed the worst measures of the government to suppress the masses. Importantly however, it dismissed the contention that the agitation was communal, admitting though that it was spearheaded by the Muslims.¹⁸⁴ Much as the Kashmir Government tried to block information from trickling out of Kashmir, news about the precarious condition of Muslims somehow kept crossing the borders of the Valley. Some prominent Muslims from British India who visited Kashmir saw the situation first-hand and made it public too. After his return from the Valley in August 1931, Dr Shafaat Ahmad Khan, Member of Minorities and Federal Structure Subcommittee Round Table Conference, issued the following statement:

I have visited Kashmir and I know from personal experience of the sad plight of our Muslim brethren in the state, how difficult it is for any Muslim to make any progress. The Muslims there are literally hewers of wood and drawers of water and are denied the barest rudiments of citizenship. Let every Muslim throughout India make this perfectly clear to the Government of India and Kashmir Government that we do not want any revolution in Kashmir State. We ask for and must have justice for our poor brethren.¹⁸⁵

Incidents of mass killing of people by the Dogra army did not stop. On 5 February 1932 when Muslims were celebrating *Jumat-ul-Vida* at Auri (Uri) a peaceful procession going towards *Idgah* was fired upon

by Dogra soldiers without any provocation, killing nine persons and wounding 50. When people were taking the dead for burial they were again fired upon, leading to more casualties. In all, 19 people were gunned down and at least 50 arrested.¹⁸⁶ According to the Special Correspondent of the *Oriental News Service*, an eyewitness to the carnage, the events “were of the most tragic character.”¹⁸⁷ Later, when people were returning home from the *Idgah* a Dogra soldier seized a man named Fattu Beg and severely assaulted him. As he raised his head from the ground, Raja Singh, a non-local Hindu *zaildar*, allegedly pounced on Fattu and put three bullets into him, killing him on the spot.¹⁸⁸

Hari Singh was now confronted with a strong popular movement within Kashmir and an equally widespread Muslim public opinion in British India to address the grievances of the majority community. Pressure was building on him both internally and externally to consider the demands of Muslims who wanted no more than equal rights as their non-Muslim compatriots and an end to discrimination against them.¹⁸⁹ The Muslims were asked to present a memorandum of their grievances which a deputation did on 19 October during a meeting with Hari Singh in Srinagar. The demands broadly included punishment after enquiry of those officials of the State who offended the religious feelings of the Muslims or interfered with their religious practices immediately before or during the disturbances; restoration of all the mosques, graveyards and other sacred Muslim places under the possession of the State or transferred to third party; reinstatement or restoration to their posts of all those employees against whom action was taken in connection with the current political movement; suitable compensation for the next of kin of those killed or disabled during the disturbances; reconsideration of the cases of persons convicted for alleged acts of violence or abetment and who failed to appeal against their conviction; appointment of an independent commission to inquire into the conduct of the state officials, the police and the military, towards the people during the disturbances, and proper punishment for those, irrespective of one’s position, found guilty; enforcement of laws for freedom of press, freedom of speech and freedom of establishment of associations on the pattern of British India; an immediate declaration that the Muslim subjects will in future be treated fairly and that there will be perfect religious freedom in the

state and conversions will entail no confiscation of property in favour of relatives as practised at present; and right of people to an effective share in the legislation of the state and of criticizing the administration and an assurance that in future they would be treated in accordance with some definite constitution.

A draft of the proposed constitution, covering fundamental rights, executive, legislature, local self-government, judiciary, revenue and services, was part of the memorandum presented to the Maharaja.¹⁹⁰ The deputation also submitted some grievances about Muslim subjects such as deprivation of proprietary rights of farmers, taxes imposed on Muslim *Bakarwals* and branding them as a criminal tribe when Hindu tribes following the same profession bore no such stigma, denial to Kashmiris to possess arms when no such restriction was on fellow subjects in Jammu, absence of military education for Muslims and need for setting up a military college with safeguards for Muslims in proportion to their population, custom duties hampering export and import of goods, pitiable condition of labourers in Kashmir and deplorably backward condition of Muslims in education. To remove educational backwardness of Muslims, the deputation demanded opening of a middle school in each important centre of Muslim population, opening of colleges for higher industrial education with at least one in Kashmir, special stipends and adequate reserved seats for Muslim students in professional and technical institutions and science faculties in schools and colleges, and Urdu as medium of instruction for girls like in the case of boys. Hari Singh appeared in a conciliatory mood and announced that he would appoint a commission to go into the grievances of Muslims.

On 12 November 1931, the Maharaja appointed a commission headed by B. J. Glancy, a European officer of the Government of India, which came to be known after his name as the Glancy Commission. Glancy was asked to "enquire into and report on the various complaints of a religious or a general nature already submitted to His Highness' Government and also such complaints as might be directly laid before the Commission."¹⁹¹ Besides Glancy as its Chairman, the Commission comprised four non-official members including one Hindu and one Muslim each from the two provinces of Kashmir and Jammu nominated by their respective communities. The Muslims of Kashmir and Jammu were represented by Ghulam

Ahmad Ashai and Chowdhary Ghulam Abbas, respectively, while the Hindus of Kashmir were represented by Prem Nath Bazaz and those of Jammu by Lok Nath Sharma. Immediately after the Commission was announced, there were attempts to sabotage it. The Hindus of the State, in general, and Kashmiri Pandits, in particular, feared that if grievances of the majority community were addressed and their genuine demands met, it would be at the cost of their privileges. Supported by the outside Kashmir anti-Muslim Press, vested interests tried to throw spanners in the functioning of the Commission and make its credibility suspect. The arrest and banishment of Mufti Ziauddin of Poonch by the Hari Kishen Koul led government was one such provocative attempt. Sharma, the Hindu representative from Jammu, resigned from the Commission in December when his demand that Hindu converts' right to ancestral property should be excluded from consideration was rejected. Serious pressure was built on Bazaz also to relinquish the Commission but he stood his ground. In the process, however, he had to suffer the wrath of his community including physical assault, removal from the *Yuwak Sabha* and migration from his ancestral home at Chandpora, a Kashmiri Pandit-dominated locality. Notwithstanding these machinations, the Commission carried on its work and on 22 March 1932 submitted its report along with recommendations.

The Report of the Glancy Commission established that the grievances of the Muslims were indisputable and needed to be addressed. On the very day Glancy submitted his report, the arrogant Hari Kishen Koul was relieved as prime minister and replaced by Colonel Colvin who, within 20 days of his assuming charge, announced the Maharaja's decision to implement the Glancy Commission recommendations. The Commission, among other things, recommended restoration of mosques and shrines to Muslims¹⁹² and dismissed the claim of Kashmiri Pandits to a larger number of Muslim places of worship which, they contended, were temples at one time. Describing such a possibility as 'out of the question', the Commission observed:

It is clearly impracticable to hold claims of this nature. In countries such as Kashmir, where in the past mass-conversion has occurred, it is only natural that a number of sacred buildings devoted to the observances of one particular faith should have

been converted to the use of another religion: where such conversion has taken place and worship is still conducted, restoration to the community representing the original users is obviously out of the question.¹⁹³

The Pandits had also laid claim over the whole of the Shankaracharya (Takht-e-Sulaiman) and Hari Parbat hills and demanded these be handed over to the community. In a representation made to the Prime Minister, Jia Lal Kilam, Kashyap Bandhu and others argued: "If *Idgah* grounds could be handed over to the Muslims, there seemed to be no earthly reason as to why Shankaracharya and Hari Parbat hills should not be handed over to us."¹⁹⁴ The Pandits also claimed easements of using the *Idgah* as "a park and a playground and pasture."¹⁹⁵ In a separate representation, the demand was made by Prem Nath Bazaz also. In seeking application of *Idgah* analogy on the twin hills of the Shankaracharya and the Hari Parbat, the fact that the *Idgah* was the property of the Muslim community ever since the land—as also that of the *Malkhah*, the main Muslim cemetery in Srinagar—was purchased by Mir Muhammad Hamdani in the 14th century and donated to the Muslims was conveniently forgotten. The *Idgah* had been seized by the Sikh government as part of its religious persecution of the Muslims, and the Glancy Commission had recommended its restoration. The two hills offered no similarity with the *Idgah*. The Commission did not find any weight in the claim and declared it to be outside the "bounds of practical politics" as

these areas have been extensively built over for a very considerable number of years, free access to such Hindu temples as exist on the hills in question is available, and it is impossible to recommend the demolition of all houses, grave yards etc. which are at present situated in these localities.¹⁹⁶

Pertinently, Hari Singh's predecessor, Pratap Singh whose contempt for Muslims was well known, had banned the entry of non-Hindus [read Muslims] into the premises of the Shankaracharya Temple.¹⁹⁷ About the complaint that converts or intending converts to Islam were, subjected to various difficulties and unnecessary enquiries leading to the harassment, the Commission observed that such activities on the

part of the police or other officials were “entirely unauthorised” and “should be strictly discouraged.”¹⁹⁸

Other important recommendations made by the Commission included promotion of education, especially at the primary level, focus on recruitment of Muslims in State service, particularly as teachers and appointment of a special officer to supervise educational development of Muslims. The Commission observed huge disparity between the number of Muslim and non-Muslim teachers. Against the total 2,201 teachers, there were only 718 Muslims, 3 Muslim head masters of middle schools against a total of 49, 1 head master of high school against a total 15, four Muslim professors in colleges against a total 33, one Muslim demonstrator against a total 8, three Muslim inspecting staff against a total 14 and four gazetted officers against a total 27.¹⁹⁹ With regard to other departments, the Commission observed that there is “no denying the fact that in the matter of state employment Muslims, who form the great majority of the population, are inadequately represented.”²⁰⁰ The proportion of Muslim representation in the departments of Public Works, Electric and Mechanical, Telegraph and Telephones, Customs, Revenue, Finance, Judicial, Forest and Stationary, and Printing, about which the Commission received data, stood at a meagre 607 against the number of 2,789 non-Muslims.²⁰¹ Not to speak of higher positions, about which it was ‘explained’ that enough qualified Muslims were not available, the community was at a very disadvantageous position even at the lowest level of menials where no educational qualification was required. Against 1,284 non-Muslim menials in the departments of Public Works, Customs, Forest and Stationery and Printing, there were only 414 Muslims. At the clerical level, in the departments of Finance, Public Works and Judicial the scenario was as dismal: 724 non-Muslims and 53 Muslims.

In response to the argument that the nominal Muslim representation in the State service was due to non-availability of qualified Muslims, the Commission found the argument ‘worthy of attention’ that “in spite of imperfections in the matter of educational facilities a large number of qualified Muslims is as a matter of fact available”²⁰² A list had been provided to the Commission showing the number of unemployed Muslim graduates and matriculates. Instances were also

pointed out in the department of Public Works Minister's office and the Government Press where non-qualified non-Muslims had been taken into employment during the last few years.

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah made a revealing statement before the Glancy Commission where, on behalf of his community, he argued that the Muslims were deliberately kept away from the fruits of education. He told the Commission that the teaching staff of all the government schools constituted

almost entirely of Hindus and as such inspires the Muslim student with but little confidence in these institutions. Thus it is that the Muslim boy, who finding himself in an environment where save for an Arabic teacher or a Muslim chaprasi he is beset by an army of Hindu teachers, has from very start a feeling of being a de-trop; day in and day out, this feeling of his is intensified by the treatment he receives at the hands of these custodians of learning and of art. This is a fact which can easily be verified by a perusal of the statistics of the Primary and Middle schools which show clearly how the Mussalmans attend the low grade schools in considerably large numbers and begin to fall out just at the threshold to the second grade standard. The reason is not far to seek—in the Primary schools there is comparatively a large number of Muslim teachers on the staff, while in Middle and High schools their element dwindles down by rapid degree until it becomes non-existent.²⁰³

Abdullah also spoke about lack of confidence of Muslims in the teaching staff and the "concrete difficulties which they [found] in their way of adapting themselves to this unfavourable environment" and cited, what he called, some typical examples. In his words, there was a group of student buglers in almost all the schools and "the Muslims are rarely taken in it, as they, according to the Hindu belief, would contaminate and defile the instruments."²⁰⁴ Thus, he said, the Hindu students get the lion's share in prizes in games and other similar activities. He likened this discrimination against Muslim students as giving the dog a bad name and killing him.

From this it is easy to imagine what a hotbed it must become for a Muslim boy, when such regrettable discriminations may be, as

they are, stretched over a series of activities in the school. This I hope will give the idea of what the Hindu mentality with regard to Muslims is capable of.²⁰⁵

Abdullah quoted several instances of discrimination against Muslims which played “a very important role in strangling them from the modern education” and how “interests of very able Muslims have been sacrificed for Hindus of comparatively low merit.”²⁰⁶ He cited the case of a Muslim student, Ghulam Mohiuddin, a topper in the list of successful students, who was ignored and a Kashmiri Pandit student, S. L. Kharoo of Bana Mohalla, earlier rusticated for misbehaviour, given the scholarship for pursuing education abroad. In another case, a Muslim doctor’s merit was ignored to deprive him of a medical scholarship for Lahore Medical College on a lame excuse of thin physical frame brought forward by “a highly bigoted ex-Hindu C. M. C. to provide this scholarship to one of his co-religionist, Dr. Shankar Nath Ganjoo.”²⁰⁷ The Muslim doctor was the first from the majority community to apply for such a scholarship and none of the applicants equalled his merit. Yet another instance was Ghulam Mohiuddin, Drawing Master in the Technical Department, who was due for promotion and despite nothing against his character, was dropped and a junior Pandit employee elevated. In contrast, S. K. Kharoo, dismissed from service for embezzlement of state money, was reinstated on a flimsy ground that he “being the son of a wealthy Kashmiri Pandit could not be guilty of the offence.”²⁰⁸

Among other grievances, prevalence of disparity between the communities, misrepresentation of the Muslims and social discrimination publicly practised against them was also highlighted. In the Sri Pratap Library, for instance, there were a number of newspapers and magazines subscribed to by the government and only a few of those were edited by the Englishmen and one or two by the members of the Muslim community constituting 97 per cent of the population of Kashmir. The rest were all Hindu organs. In the Sri Pratap Museum, a statue identified as ‘A Pandit boy of old type’, far from being prehistoric, wore the dress of ‘the present day Kashmiri Pandit boys’, while two statues with features betraying but little likeliness to human faces were captioned as “A Muslim bride and bridegroom”.

Abdullah described these misleading statements as “unpardonable” and “only to proclaim to the world that theirs [Kashmiri Pandits] is the only civilised community in Kashmir.”²⁰⁹

The Kashmiri leader also referred to a signboard at the entrance of a flight of steps leading to the place where boats stood moored at the first bridge. The signboard read ‘Hindu Women’s Ghat’. Abdullah told the Glancy Commission,

From this it is easy to infer what other discrimination might not be made between two peoples in a Government where favouritism is evident in such trifling matters; this signboard stands as a monument of the sort of tolerance in vogue among Hindus in Kashmir.²¹⁰

He also highlighted instances of discrimination against Muslims in every sphere including at government-run hospitals and dispensaries which were full of Hindu doctors and compounders and as such “are of little help to Muslims.” The panacea given to Muslims for hundred and one melodies is the infusion of *chiraita* called “bitter” and they “consume great quantities of sodas, cheap infusions, and ordinary ointments and eyedrops.”²¹¹ If it were not for the Christian Mission Hospitals where they received proper attention, “Kashmiri Muslims would long have become bankrupt physically,”²¹² this notwithstanding the government-collected Hospital Tax from the Muslims.

The bias against Muslims extended even to developmental works. Roads were constructed for purposes other than convenience of all communities and benefited most the Hindu shrines like the far away Khir Bhavani temple at Tulmulla. The upkeep of the road in comparison to the one leading to Hazratbal in the city itself or Char-i-Sharief, not even half good as the road to Hazratbal, amply illustrated the Muslims case.²¹³ The Muslim peasants had to pay a tax called *Shitra Shahi*, and the money thus collected would go to Dharmarth, a department established for erecting and maintaining temples, *dharamshalas* and *shivalas*, but the Muslims could not claim any help from this fund. The ‘Cow Protection Fund’ was sourced by fines imposed on Muslims. The semi-naked, semi-starved Muslim zamindars, who were the source of livelihood to all, to many even of luxury, were themselves destined to go without bread for six out

of twelve months.²¹⁴ How a Muslim was denied even the fruit of his own toil was illustrated by Abdullah thus:

I know a zamindar Abdullah. After toiling almost to death in cutting hills and breaking stones, he succeeded in levelling a plot of hilly land. He thought that the wheel of his fortune had at last taken a turn in his favour, and accordingly began to build castles in the air. I remember well his waxing eloquent when he spoke of this exploit of his. But alas, no sooner was the land about to repay him for his toils and labours than a Hindu military officer Colonel Jamiat Singh, appeared on the scene, showed an order from the powers-that-be and appropriated the land. This I assure you is no rare happening. In fact all these and a thousand more of other wrongs could be traced back to one evil and that is that the Mussalmans have absolutely no voice in the administration of the land.²¹⁵

To further prove his point on discrimination against Muslims, Abdullah quoted the following brazen instance of official bias against a community even in civic matters:

Apart from the ghats of Hindu temples which are one and all in a very good repair, let us observe the ghat leading to the house of one Pandit Anand Koul, at the 4th Bridge. How neatly and nicely it is paved. Now please go a few yards up the river and see the most sacred of the Kashmiri Mussalmans shrines, the Khankahi Mualla. What a spectacle of dilapidation the ghat leading from it to the river presents to the eye. One glance of both these ghats is enough to make one realise how in Kashmir the convenience of a single Pandit gentleman carries more weight than the comfort of whole Muslim community.... The same is the case of the streets and alleys in the city. The lanes in the Hindu localities in-spite of the Pandit's unhygienic domestic habits are in better condition than the alleys in Muslim quarters of the city.²¹⁶

The discrimination against the Muslims in the police department was more pronounced. The community-wise representation as documented in a newspaper report titled, "Kashmir Police: Discrepancy in Muslim Representation" established near-total absence of Muslims in the Kashmir Police Force.²¹⁷ None of the 3 superintendents of police,

3 assistant superintendents of police and 7 inspectors of police was a Muslim. Of the 41 sub-inspectors of police, Muslims accounted for only 12. Out of the total 190 head constables and 1,503 constables, Muslims were 45 and 595, respectively. Out of the total 21 police stations including Muzaffarabad, 16 were fully manned by the Hindus and only five had a Muslim sub-inspector each. In Srinagar, none of the two district superintendents of police, 1 assistant superintendent of police, 1 inspector of police and 4 sub-inspectors of police posted in the capital city was a Muslim. The prosecuting staff comprising 1 court inspector, 9 sub-court inspectors and 10 naib court inspectors had only 1 sub-court inspector and 1 naib court inspector from the Muslim community. The entire clerical staff, barring 4 Muslim clerks, in the office of the deputy inspector general of police was Hindu. In the C. I. D. wing of the Police Department, from informers to the superintendent, there was just 1 Muslim, a head constable. On the establishment of the Inspector General of Police, the Muslim representation was a solitary peon. In the Traffic Control Department, there was no Muslim among the inspectors, sub-inspectors, office superintendent, clerks and peons. Most of the clerks in all police offices possessed meagre or no educational qualifications worth the name, nor were all the non-Muslim police officers equipped with the requisite qualifications.²¹⁸

In response to the Muslim complaint that they were deliberately kept out of the channels of administration, Kashmiri Pandits and the Kashmir Government put forth the argument that qualified Muslims were not available which, though, was not the case. However, the Muslims argued that even if qualified Muslims were difficult to obtain there was no reason why the existing disparity should continue in the matter of menials. The Glancy Commission described the argument as "weighty."²¹⁹ The Commission also highlighted the complaint that "certain high officials have deliberately discouraged the employment of Muslims and have endeavoured to keep the Muslim community in ignorance of any vacancies that may occur in State service, so that these vacancies may be surreptitiously filled by jobbery and nepotism."²²⁰ It recommended that minimum qualification for recruitment to government services should not be pitched unnecessarily high and all vacancies should be effectively advertised. It also recommended creation of a system for recruitment where every

section of the population would get its due share. The Commission recommended withdrawal of power of appointment of such heads of departments where due consideration to the claims of any particular community appeared to have not been given, and vesting this power in ministers. It identified departments of Public Works, Customs and Press for such an action. "This should have the effect of leading all departmental heads to realise that no unfair discrimination can be allowed."²²¹ The recommendation was an official admission that discrimination existed against Muslims.

To the Kashmiri Pandits who claimed that their educated unemployed were more in number than those among Muslims, the Commission recalled Hari Singh's reply to a deputation of the community few months earlier in which he had told them, .

I am certain that you will be the first to recognise that with the steady growth of education in other communities the position of advantage which your community enjoyed in the past in regard to State service cannot continue: it will, however, be necessary to consider what other openings can legitimately be provided for those who cannot be absorbed in State departments and this question will receive the sympathetic attention of my Government.²²²

The Commission found the allegations of bribery and corruption practically in every department "to a very great extent well founded."²²³

The Glancy Commission Report struck a serious blow to those who circulated prejudice against Kashmiri Muslims and described their struggle for basic rights as a fight against their Hindu ruler and his co-religionist subjects. Years later, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah called it as "a slap on the face"²²⁴ of those who sought to create and propagate such an impression. Unfortunately, for Hari Singh, the Kashmiri Pandits did not let his optimism last long. They refused to accept the report, reacted sharply against it and, in fact, openly expressed their anger against the Maharaja for according his approval to the report. Sheetal Nath, a Pandit-dominated quarter of the old city with a temple of the same name, became the centre of conspiracies against the implementation of the Glancy Commission Report where the community openly gave vent to divisive feelings and provocative

slogans. The atmosphere was vitiated by manipulations and conspiracies. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah recalls:

The shrine of Sheetal Nath in Srinagar became a secret den of conspiracies to scuttle the activities of the [Glancy] Commission. The Pandits gave vent to their rancour by raising hate slogans.... During the same time students of Islamiya School, who took out a procession in the city in connection with a week-long cleanliness activities, were attacked under a pre-planned conspiracy hatched at Ganpatyar, a locality inhabited by Pandits. The headmaster, Master Peerzada Ghulam Rasool, acted with discretion. He did not let the matter precipitate. However, the news spread. A leading champion of Pandits, Jia Lal Kilam, made an inflammatory speech at Sheetal Nath. This added fuel to the fire. Already, the non-Muslims had turned hostile against the Muslims. They lost restraint and swooped on them.²²⁵

The Kashmiri Pandits were not in a position to wage an all-out agitation as that would have undermined the Hindu rule and its interests in Kashmir. However, feeling threatened by possible fallout of educational development of Muslims on their preponderance in the State Services, the Kashmiri Pandits "started a bitter and venomous campaign against Muslims"²²⁶ and also launched, what they called, the *Roti* (Bread) Agitation. Jia Lal Kilam and Kashyap Bandhu were the brain behind the agitation during which Pandit students of colleges and schools were mobilized to stage protests and raise slogans. Bandhu went to the extent of describing the recommendations of the Glancy Commission as "designed to drive the last nail into the coffin of Hinduism in Kashmir."²²⁷ As the first dictator of the agitation, he threatened "open defiance of law" if modifications were not made in the Glancy Report "in three days."²²⁸ He made a sarcastic remark on the abilities of the Kashmiri Muslims saying that "I shall welcome the day when our Mohammadan brethren give proof of that efficiency which will give them a legitimate claim to all government posts."²²⁹ Prem Nath Bazaz, himself a Member of the Glancy Commission, also sounded a warning for the government:

The iron has entered the soul of Pandit Youngmen and they are in no mood to distinguish friends from foes. Nothing short

of a definite and clear announcement of the Government's resolve to provide openings for them in Industrial and Agricultural fields and other avenues immediately followed by practical steps in this direction can avert the situation that is developing in Kashmir.²³⁰

The Maharaja's Government made it clear to a deputation of the Sanatan Dharma Youngmen's Association that

any grievance short of going back on the recommendations of the Glancy Report which were found practicable to assist them to tide over the difficult stage of transition and to help them to qualify themselves for other pursuits would receive sympathetic consideration provided the request was made in a constitutional manner.²³¹

It warned them that "any breach of law and order would be immediately dealt with and that if they indulged in any such activities the promise to examine sympathetically their request would be cancelled."

Notwithstanding the warning, the Pandits launched the Roti Agitation for which the youth of the community were specifically motivated. In an Urdu language handbill issued by the first dictator, they were asked to "stand up and plunge into the sacred fire to undo the injustice meted out to you."²³² "If you are successful, you will be prosperous and if you perish your name will live long and you will end up in paradise," the message reminded them, invoked the "five thousand years' authentic history" of the community and drew civilizational parallels with the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Macedonians.²³³ During the agitation, groups of agitators would trespass government offices and snatch writing holders from clerks. When the government did not pay any attention, a procession of students was taken out from Sheetal Nath raising anti-Maharaja slogans and forcing shopkeepers to close down. The agitators were ordered to be flogged and a Kashmiri Pandit police official, Bishamber Nath, was put in charge of the flogging centre. No sooner were a few students subjected to flogging than the agitation fizzled out. Kilam and Bandhu were sentenced to six months imprisonment. Rughonath Vaishnavi, who was a college student and suffered a month's jail term, later publicly stated that

the agitation was a farce and had been started by Kilam, Bandhu and other Pandit leaders “as a counter against Muslim demands.”²³⁴ Kilam with an anti-Muslim incline had in 1924 advocated physical training for Kashmiri Pandits, arguing that “there could be no true unity between the Hindus and the Muslims as long as the Hindus were the weaker party.”²³⁵ He shed whatever little secular pretensions he had when he equated the recommendation of the Glancy Commission about an increase in the number of Persian and Arabic teachers for Muslim students in government schools with “Muslimisation of our culture” and “wholesale Muslimisation of teachers’ cadre.”²³⁶ Bandhu, on the other hand, made no bones about “Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan is my ideal.”²³⁷

The Kashmiri Pandits were in no mood to lose their predominance in state services which they thought was their birth right. Few months before the Glancy Commission Report was out, the government invited applications for certain posts from Muslims alone and many Kashmiri Pandits were prepared to embrace Islam to grab these.²³⁸ Tyndale Biscoe recalls that soon after his arrival in Kashmir, he received calls from Hindu youths to “read the Bible with [him]” … so that “[they] might become interested in them personally and find lucrative posts for them in government service, with a few other advantages thrown in.”²³⁹

The Pandit community opposed tooth and nail the recommendation of the Glancy Commission that minimum qualification for vacancies should not be pitched high unnecessarily, as it was seen prospectively favouring Muslims but, ironically, demanded that “where two State Subjects gave tender for one and the same contract, if one was a Kashmiri Pandit, all things taken together the Kashmiri Pandit should be given preference.”²⁴⁰ While for all other things, the Kashmiri Pandits considered themselves as part of the larger Hindu community in the state and, for this reason alone, remained on the side of the Hindu ruler, for securing government service, they sought to be treated as a separate entity. Hence, they complained that out of the total 763 gazetted appointments (628 non-Muslims and 135 Muslims), their community held only 74.²⁴¹ The number, in any case, was 740 per cent more than the 10 gazetted posts held by the Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir.

Prime Minister Colonel Colvin, who had seen the irrationality of the Roti Agitation, made the following strong comments on, what he termed, the ‘artificial agitation’:

The Pandits are said to be crying for bread. What they evidently want is that all the bread and butter that there is to be had in Kashmir should remain safe for them for all time to come. They are worried by the rather distant prospect of a certain number of posts in the State Services being filled by Muslims. This, they say, will leave them without bread, and that they must, therefore, agitate. But if the Service of the State is the only source of bread in Kashmir, what about those millions of men who for ages have been excluded from this service? Evidently the question of bread does not come in where the Muslims, who form about 95 percent, of the population of the State, are concerned.²⁴²

A few months later, the government released a list of recipients of scholarships in which, for the first time, Kashmiri Pandits did not get the usual lion’s share. In protest, they refused to participate in the Maharaja’s birthday celebrations. On 23 September 1932, a procession was taken out from Sheetal Nath which brought down a photograph of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah from a ceremonial arch, leading to tension between the two communities. Muslim shopkeepers closed their shops and came out on streets. Kilam made a highly provocative speech at Sheetal Nath following which his house was attacked. Clashes broke out between the two communities in which a Pandit man and a Muslim lady were killed and over hundred persons injured on both sides. The situation was brought under control at a joint public meeting at which Kilam expressed regret on behalf of Hindus and tendered an unqualified apology.²⁴³

The bloodshed of Muslims in 1931 brought about political awakening among them and they organized themselves to launch a peaceful struggle for their basic rights. In 1932, the All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference was formed, with Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah as its president, to seek justice for the Muslims of the princely state. The struggle for the rights of Muslims under the aegis of the Muslim Conference was in its infancy when Jawaharlal Nehru,

a prominent Hindu leader of the Indian National Congress with Kashmiri Pandit lineage, started taking extraordinary interest in the affairs of Kashmir. He befriended Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, who by now had emerged as the leader of Kashmiri Muslims and enjoyed massive popular approval, and exercised dominating influence over him. The Nehru–Abdullah friendship was destined to change the course of history in Kashmir and soon the Kashmiri leader discarded the robe of leadership of Muslims in 1939 and converted the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference into a secular Jammu and Kashmir National Conference to attract the minority Pandit community into its fold. However, as the events unfolded later, he could not enlist the support of Kashmiri Pandits who, in his own words, struck a dragger into the heart of the people's movement of Kashmir and began to dance to somebody else's tune.²⁴⁴ Abdullah was soon in for a rude shock when after dissolving the Muslim Conference against the wishes of the Muslim majority he was confronted by enraged Pandit leaders including Jia Lal Kilam, Kashyap Bandhu and Prem Nath Bazaz who made a big fuss over his description of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the final messenger and the Qur'an as the last revelation from God. He was addressing a *Milad un Nabi* function and had spoken only what as a Muslim the divine scripture taught him and what he believed in as an article of faith. The Pandit trio made such an issue of it that Kilam and Bandhu resigned from the National Conference and Bazaz followed suit soon.²⁴⁵ They had objected to raising of the slogan, *Nazar-e-Takbeer*, and recitation of verses of the Qur'an in public meetings. Owing to the Pandit hostility towards him, an upset Abdullah, on 28 July 1941, wondered: "What is the use of preaching nationalism to Pandits who cannot even tolerate the washing of hands and face by us on the banks of [the] Jhelum?"²⁴⁶ In his words, the Pandit leaders had wanted to mould the policies of the National Conference according to their wishes but having failed in their objective opted for an exit from the party.²⁴⁷ Reflecting on the incident, Abdullah writes:

This was a strange logic and, if taken further, where was the rationale for the Indian National Congress to adopt *Vanday Matram* as its National song? This [song] was part of Bankim

Chandra Chatterjee's novel, *Anand Math*, that was in its entirety anti-Muslim. The last two stanzas in particular were extremely hurtful for Muslims and were thus deleted. The slogan of *Bharat Mata ki jai* (Victory be to Mother India) was often raised during the public meetings of the [Indian National] Congress. This deified India as Goddess Mother and created an idea of idol worship that ran counter to the Islamic concept of oneness of God but Muslims or other minorities never objected to it. Nor did our non-Muslim critics have any explanation for it. I tried to convince them that slogans and language of a speech are used considering the level of understanding of the audience and the cultural milieu with which they are familiar. Also, we had awakened a dormant nation by the slogan of *Naara e Takbeer*. The purpose of converting the *Muslim Conference* into the *National Conference* was never that Muslims will abdicate their religious traditions because we had never demanded any such thing from non-Muslims.... They [Kilam and Bandhu] forgot that Mahatma Gandhi would repeatedly call himself a true and devoted Hindu but that never put his nationalism to question.²⁴⁸

Subsequent developments saw the last Dogra ruler, Hari Singh, fleeing from the Valley in October 1947 in the face of the Tribal Attack and Nehru, as Prime Minister of free India, airdropping his troops in Srinagar. The Partition of India brought with it the worst communal riots, killing and uprooting millions of people from both the communities. The subcontinent was in flames. Kashmir's immediate neighbourhood too was rocked by mayhem and manslaughter. In Jammu, tens of thousands of Muslims were butchered and women abducted and raped by the Dogra army and communalist Hindus and Sikhs. Between July and November 1947, widespread communal violence, aided and abetted by the State, was organized against Muslims in the eastern districts of Jammu province in which, according to the *Times* of London, dated 10 August 1948, as many as 237,000 Muslims were exterminated.²⁴⁹ In Kashmir, the Dogra army, the perceived saviours of the Pandits, had deserted them. However, despite the surcharged atmosphere, they remained out of harm's way, thanks to their Muslim compatriots who took the responsibility of their security. On the contrary, about two dozen Kashmiri Muslim *tongawallas* who helped in

transporting the scared non-Kashmiri Hindus to Jammu were waylaid and killed at Nagrota.²⁵⁰

On the political front, not very long after Abdullah was accused of gifting Kashmir to Nehru, their friendship that, to borrow the Sino-Pak-relation jargon, was “deeper than oceans and higher than the Himalaya” had turned sour and ended with the latter seeing himself deposed as the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir and arrested on 9 August 1953. Ironically, Abdullah’s deposition and arrest came on the instructions of the very friend whom, a couple of years earlier at a public meeting in Srinagar, he had boastfully sung the famous Persian verse:

*Man tu shudam tu man shudi, man tan shudam tu jaan shudi
Ta' kas na goyad baad azin, man deegram tu deegari*

[I have become you and you have become me, I am the body
you are the soul. Let nobody say that we are separate.]

Abdullah held many Kashmiri Pandits responsible for creating misunderstanding between him and Nehru that ultimately resulted in his ouster and arrest. These included Prime Minister Nehru’s Private Secretary, Dwarka Nath Dhar, a Central Information Service officer, Kashi Nath Bamzai, and a Brigadier in army, B. M. Koul, who was posted in Udhampur in 1949 where soldiers under his command had kidnapped some Gujjar women. “The matter came to my notice and I had him removed from the State,” writes Abdullah in his memoirs.²⁵¹ Another important character in the conspiracy against him that he identifies is Durga Prasad Dhar. He holds him squarely responsible for his arrest and subsequent oppression on Kashmiris, and describes his role as “evil in the heinous drama [of Abdullah’s deposition and arrest].”²⁵² Dhar, who served as a minister in Jammu and Kashmir and Government of India, and Ambassador of India in the erstwhile Soviet Union, played “a sterling role in assisting the Indian Army during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1947.”²⁵³ Abdullah accused him of working as an agent of the Indian intelligence agency and creating misunderstanding between him and the Government of India as well as leading and directing the army contingent that indiscriminately fired upon Kashmiri Muslims in 1953.²⁵⁴ “Later, he exhibited this feat in

1965 also when Batamaloo and some other villages in the Valley were torched and thousands of people rendered homeless,"²⁵⁵ Abdullah writes in his autobiography.

With Jawaharlal Nehru and his daughter, Indira Gandhi, ruling India most of its post-independence period, the Pandits found in them sympathetic and eager-to-listen ears. Some of the community members being close aides to the Prime Minister of India served the interests of the Pandits, again at the cost of the Muslim majority population. This was the period when Pandits would flaunt their blood connection to the rulers of India. Within Kashmir, the community was largely perceived as working for India as its eyes and ears. Despite this widely held view, Muslims rarely showed feelings of rancour against them. In fact, the Pandits enjoyed ample goodwill and confidence of Muslims even in times of the latter's own precarious situations. The frequent bloody and violent *Sher-Bakra*²⁵⁶ fights on the streets of Srinagar city would suddenly come to a temporary halt to allow a passer-by Kashmiri Pandit safe passage from the scene of violence.

Notes and References

1. Besides being repressive, the Dogra rule also saw many inauspicious occurrences like epidemics, earthquakes and floods visiting Kashmir quite frequently, taking a heavy toll of its people and their properties.
2. Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir (1931–1940)*, 130. According to Saraf (*Kashmiris Fight for Freedom*, I: 373), Qadeer belonged to Amroha, a town in north-Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. Justice Javaid Iqbal (*Zindah Rood*, 50) mentions Qadeer as a Pathan from the Frontier Province. Munshi Muhammad Ishaq (*Nidai-e-Haq*, 106) claims Khan was from Rampur town of Uttar Pradesh. According to Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, Abdul Qadeer belonged to Allahabad (*Aljamiat*, 13 August 1931). The *Pratap*, Lahore, mentioned Qadeer as a butler in the employment of an English lady (*Pratap*, 20 August 1931).
3. The prisoner was not brought out of the jail cell to court room and no proceedings took place that day (*Muslim Outlook*, Lahore, 14 August 1931).
4. *Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore, 21 August 1931; *Pratap*, 20 August 1931.
5. Hassan, *Kashmir under the Sultans*, 122–23.
6. *Ibid.*, 124.
7. Doghlat was a soldier and a writer who penned a chronicle, *Tarikh-i-Rashidi*.
8. Hassan, *Kashmir under the Sultans*, 129.

9. Ibid., 139.
10. Ibid., 142.
11. Ibid., 145.
12. Ibid., 151. In some cases, the reward was given five times as much.
13. Ibid., 166.
14. Ibid., 176.
15. Ibid., 177.
16. Ibid., 178.
17. Ibid., 189–90.
18. Saifuddin, *Khulasat-ul-Taweerikh*, 67.
19. Ibid.
20. Majboor, *Mughal Intizamia Aur Kashmir*, Sheeraza, 200.
21. Ahmad, *Jhelum: The River through My Backyard*, 45.
22. *Civil and Military Gazette*, Foreign and Political Department, File No. 7(5)-R of 1929, Government of India, 'R' Branch Nos 1–2, NAI; Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, 119.
23. Thorp, *Kashmir Misgovernment*, 17.
24. J. L. K. Kilam, "Moslem Movement in Kashmir-II," *Princely India*, 3 February 1932.
25. *Kashmir*, Amritsar, 14 August 1931.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid.
29. Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir (1931–1940)*, 117.
30. The peasants in Kashmir were at the mercy of the State officials and could be ejected at any time.
31. *Kaar-i-sarkar* was substituted for *begar* or forced labour but the peasantry had "become more victim of it at present than under the *beggar*" (*Weekly Ranbir*, Jammu, 9 Har 1983 Samvat).
32. There was provincial as well as communal bias in policies adopted by the government. Outsiders were preferred and given incentives to do business and obtain contracts even when local Muslim contractors offered lower rates. Lakhs of rupees were given as interest-free loan to non-Muslims to set up industries while no such facility was given to Muslims. Muslims convicted of murder were hanged but no such punishment was accorded to non-Muslims. Muslim *Bakarwals* were branded as criminal tribe while Hindu *Bakarwals* did not bear such stigma. Non-Muslims were exempted from forced labour.
33. Muslims were grossly discriminated against in terms of employment. Figures representative of this discrimination have been given elsewhere in this book.
34. No political rights or civil liberties existed. Freedom of press and platform were absent. Even a religious congregation was subject to approval by the government.
35. A Muslim converting to Hinduism was not deprived of his right to property and guardianship over his children, while in the case of a Hindu converting to

- Islam all such rights were lost to him. Several mosques, shrines and other sacred places were in the possession of the government.
36. Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, 121.
 37. Weekly *The Kashmir Musalman*, Lahore, 10 May 1931.
 38. Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir (1931–1940)*, 126.
 39. Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight for Freedom (1819–1946)*, I: 374; Abdullah, *Aatash-e-Chinar*, 61.
 40. File No. Con-56, Year 1987–88 (Bikrimi), Subject: His Highness' Confidential Orders, Archives Repository, Jammu.
 41. Ibid.
 42. *The Statesman*, 15 July 1931.
 43. Ibid., 63–64.
 44. Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir (1931–1940)*, 132. Khan quotes Pir Mohammad Afzal Makhdoomi about 10 casualties at the spot, while the number was higher. *The Tribune* dated 28 July 1931 confirmed 21 deaths.
 45. *Muslim Outlook*, 14 August 1931.
 46. Ibid.
 47. Ibid.
 48. Ibid., 16 August 1931.
 49. Ibid., 14 August 1931.
 50. Ibid.
 51. Ibid.
 52. Ibid., 16 August 2015.
 53. Ibid.
 54. Ibid.
 55. Ibid.
 56. Report of the *Srinagar Riot Enquiry Committee-1931*, 54.
 57. Ibid., 1.
 58. Ibid., 16.
 59. Ibid.
 60. Ibid.
 61. Ibid.
 62. Ibid., 14.
 63. Ibid., 1.
 64. Ibid., 2.
 65. Ibid., 11.
 66. Ibid., 9.
 67. Ibid., 19.
 68. Ibid., 14.
 69. Ibid.
 70. Ibid., 13.
 71. Ibid.
 72. Ibid.
 73. Weekly *Amar*, Lahore, 31 August 1931.

74. Report of the *Srinagar Riot Enquiry Committee-1931*, 13.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid.
77. Ibid.
78. Ibid., 14.
79. Ibid.
80. *Weekly Amar*, 31 August 1931.
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid.
83. Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight for Freedom (1819–1946)*, I: 376.
84. The dead included: (a) Ghulam Mohammad Halwai, 25 years, Jamia Masjid
 (b) Abdul Khalique Shora, 33 years, Wazapura (c) Ghulam Nabi Kalawal, 27
 years, Pandain (d) Ghulam Mohammad Soofi, 20 years, Daribal (e) Ghulam
 Qadir Butt, 22 years, Mohalla Bahaudin (f) Mohammad Ramazan, 19 years,
 Khanyar (g) Mohammad Usman, 20 years, Kalashpora (h) Ghulam Mohammad
 Naqash, 22 years, Kani Kadal (i) Ghulam Rasool Darzi, 23 years, Ahmeda
 Kadal (j) Amir Joo Jandagaroo, 27 years, Gojwara (k) Abdul Ahad, 23 years,
 Gao Kadal (l) Ghulam Ahmed Kalbaf, 32 years, Fateh Kadal (m) Amir Joo
 Makai, 35 years, Nawa Kadal (n) Shaaban Joo Makai, 60 years, Nawa Kadal
 (o) Subhan Khan, 22 years, Nawab Bazar (p) Abdul Khalique, 30 years,
 Watal Kadal (q) Mohammad Akbar, 33 years, Zaldagar (r) Abdul Qadir, 26
 years, Bahauddin Sahib (s) Ghulam Rasool Dora, 27 years, Gotapura (t) Ahmed
 Rather, 30 years, Nowshehra (u) Ahmed Dar, 30 years, Nowshehra (v) Wali
 Wani, 50 years, Batapura.
85. Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir (1931–1940)*, 133.
86. Abdulla, *Aatash-e-Chinar*, 65–66.
87. In an interview with the author on 7 October 2015.
88. Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir (1931–1940)*, 133.
89. Ibid., 133–34.
90. Ibid., 134.
91. Rashid, *Tarikh-i-Hurriyat-i-Kashmir*, 108. The Battle of Uhud was the second
 battle fought between a force from the Muslims of Medina led by Prophet
 Muhammad (peace be upon him) and an army from Makkah led by Abu
 Sufian. It was fought in the third year of the Migration, corresponding to 625
 AD, on the slopes and plains of Mount Uhud.
92. Hussain, *Sheikh Abdullah—A Biography: The Crucial Period 1905–1939*, 102.
93. Ibid.
94. Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir (1931–1940)*, 134.
95. Ibid., 303.
96. Ibid., 134.
97. Ibid., 135.
98. Abdulla, *Aatash-e-Chinar*, 72.
99. Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir (1931–1940)*, 136.
100. *Daily Inqilab*, Lahore, 13 August 1931; *Daily Siasat*, Lahore, 16 August 1931.

101. *Kashmir*, Amritsar, 13 August 1931.
102. *Daily Siasat*, Lahore, 16 August 1931.
103. In 1924, during his stay in France, Hari Singh was involved in a sex scandal with a white lady, Mrs Robinson. He was blackmailed by imposters and had to pay them huge sum of money before returning home with many eggs on his face. The *Time* magazine covered the scandal in detail.
104. *Taqat*, Delhi, 21 October 1931.
105. *Guru Ghantal* (Kashmir Number), Lahore, 30 August 1931.
106. File No. C.S./P. B.151/S, Year 1931; State Archives Repository, Jammu. [P.M. stands for per month; -12/6 for 2 anas and 6 paise, representing old coinage according to which 16 anas made a rupee; Rafiz loot refers to the loot of the Shia community allegedly committed by Sunni Muslims in Srinagar. Samvat 1929 corresponds to 1875 AD.]
107. *Weekly Amar*, 31 August 1931.
108. *Inqilab*, Lahore, 15 August 1931.
109. *Weekly Amar*, 31 August 1931.
110. Ibid.
111. *Daily Siasat*, Lahore, 16 August 1931.
112. Ibid.
113. Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir (1931–1940)*, 137. Azad faced flak from pro-Kashmir movement Muslims of India for visiting the Valley on the invitation of the oppressor. An open letter was published in the *Siasat*, Lahore on 13 August 1931 in which he was questioned about the purpose of his visit and whether he had undertaken the visit on his own or on the invitation of the Maharaja. He was also asked to make his stand clear on atrocities committed against Kashmiri Muslims and also on the campaign of sympathy started by Indian Muslims for their brethren in Kashmir. The letter written by Gazi Mohiuddin Ajmeri of the *Jamiat-e-Khilafat* also demanded to know Azad's personal views on the oppression of Kashmiris.
114. *Aljamiat*, Delhi, 13 August 1931.
115. Ibid.
116. Iqbal, *Zindah Rood: Allama Iqbal Ki Mukammal Sawaneh Hayat*, 500.
117. Ibid., 501. Iqbal was also banned from entering Kashmir and this ban remained in force till he was alive.
118. Ibid., 500.
119. Ibid.
120. Ibid.
121. Ibid., 500–01.
122. *Guru Ghantal*, *Kashmir Number*, Lahore, 30 August 1931.
123. Ibid.
124. *Daily Siasat*, Lahore, 16 August 1931.
125. *Weekly Amar*, Lahore, 31 August 1931.
126. Ibid.
127. File No. 509 PR-21/N, Year 1939, Archives Repository, Jammu.

128. Ibid.
129. Iqbal's ancestors were from a Kashmiri Brahman *gotra* Sapru who lived in a south Kashmir village in Kulgam. His great grandfather, Haji Loai or Loal Haji, had converted to Islam. The family at some point in time migrated to Sialkot in the Punjab where Iqbal was born on 9 November 1877.
130. Parimu, *A History of Muslim Rule in Kashmir (1320–1819)*, 371.
131. Singh, "Iqbal's Hindu Relations," *The Telegraph*, Calcutta, 30 June 2007.
132. Khoihami, *Tarikh-i-Hassan*, II: 730.
133. Ibid., 738.
134. Iqbal, *Zindah Rood*, 35–36.
135. *Weekly Karam Vir*, Lahore, 25 August 1931; *Weekly Amar*, Lahore, 31 August 1931.
136. *Weekly Amar*, Lahore, 31 August 1931.
137. Ibid.
138. Ibid.
139. Ibid.
140. *Milap*, 16 August 1931.
141. *Kashmir*, Amritsar, 14 August 1931.
142. Ibid.
143. *Daily Inqilab*, Lahore, 11 August 1931.
144. Ibid.
145. Ibid.
146. Ibid.
147. Ibid.
148. Ibid.
149. *Milap*, 26 August 1931.
150. Ibid.
151. Ibid.
152. Ibid.
153. *Weekly Amar*, Lahore, 31 August 1931.
154. *Milap*, 26 August 1931.
155. Ibid., 25 August 1931.
156. Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir (1931–1940)*, 140.
157. Ibid.
158. *Roots in Kashmir*, 13 July, 1931 in the Pages of History, <http://kashmiris-in-exile.blogspot.in/2010/07/13-july-1931-in-pages-of-history.html>
159. Sushil Pandit, "Truth About the Martyrs of Kashmir's July 13 Carnage," *Daily O*, www.dailyo.in/politics/july-13-jammu-and-kashmir-kashmiri-pandits-martyrs-day/story/1/4963.html
160. Kilam, *A History of Kashmiri Pandits*, 292.
161. Koul, *Kashmir Then and Now—5000 BC to 1972 AD*, 101.
162. Ibid.
163. The book was first published in 1955.
164. In an interview with the author on 7 October 2015.

165. In an interview with the author on 7 October 2015.
166. See note 159.
167. Taseer, Rashid, *Tehreek-i-Hurriyat-e-Kashmir*, 123. Saraf (*Kashmiris Fight for Freedom*, 401–02) also quotes the incident.
168. Ibid.
169. Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight for Freedom (1819–1946)*, I: 399–400.
170. Ibid., 414.
171. Ibid.
172. Ibid.
173. Ibid., 403.
174. *Al-Fazl*, 29 September 1931. Also quoted by Saraf.
175. Ibid.
176. Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight for Freedom (1819–1946)*, I: 403.
177. “1931: An Untold Story of Anantnag,” *Greater Kashmir*, 13 July 2013.
178. Bazaz, *Inside Kashmir*, 154–55.
179. Ibid.
180. Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight for Freedom (1819–1946)*, 405.
181. Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, 132.
182. Ibid.
183. Taseer, *Tehreek-i-Hurriyat-e-Kashmir*, 135.
184. Abdullah, *Aatash-e-Chinar*, 98.
185. *The Outlook*, Lahore, 14 August 1931.
186. *Eastern Times*, Lahore, 15 February 1932.
187. Ibid.
188. Ibid.
189. Hari Singh reportedly sought help from Hamiduddin, the Nawab of Bhopal, who was a friend and admirer of Dr Sir Muhammad Iqbal. The Nawab discussed with Iqbal the Kashmir situation and the latter was credited with being the thought behind setting up of the Glancy Commission by the Maharaja.
190. A broad-based Conference representing various interests met under B. J. Glancy to discuss the introduction of constitutional reforms in response to the Maharaja’s earlier commitment to the Muslims. The Conference, comprising 2 non-official and 12 official members, submitted its report in April 1931.
191. Report of the Commission Appointed Under The Orders of His Highness The Maharaja Bahadur dated 12 November 1931 to Enquire into Grievances & Complaints (Jammu: Ranbir Government Press, 1932), 1.
192. Ibid.; The Pathar Masjid, Khanqah-e-Sokhta, Khanqah-e-Bulbulshah, Khanqah-e-Darashikoh and Malshahi Bagh Mosque had been restored to Muslims before the Glancy Commission submitted its report.
193. Ibid., 4.
194. File No. 215/149-P.S., Year 1932, State Archives Repository, Jammu. The letter is dated *Baisakh 21, 1989 Bikrimi*, corresponding to 3 May 1932.
195. Memorandum of the Kashmiri Pandits on the Terms of Reference of The Grievance Enquiry Commission appointed by His Highness the Maharaja

- Bahadur of Jammu & Kashmir (Kashmir: Sanatan Dharam Youngmen's Association, Kashmir [Printed], 1 December 1931), 33.
196. Report of the Commission Appointed Under The Orders of His Highness The Maharaja Bahadur dated the 12th November 1931 to Enquire into Grievances & Complaints (Jammu: Ranbir Government Press, 1932), 4.
197. File No. 97/E-43, Year 1917, Archives Repository, Jammu. Pratap Singh would not bear the sight of a Muslim in the morning after he rose from bed (Khayal, *Iqbal Aur Tehreek-e-Azadi-e-Kashmir*, 26–27).
198. Report of the Commission Appointed Under the Orders of His Highness The Maharaja Bahadur dated the 12th November 1931 to Enquire into Grievances & Complaints (Jammu: Ranbir Government Press, 1932), 5.
199. Ibid., 15.
200. Ibid., 18.
201. Ibid.
202. Ibid.
203. *The Sunrise*, Qadian, Punjab, 29 January 1932.
204. Ibid.
205. Ibid.
206. Ibid.
207. Ibid.
208. Ibid.
209. Ibid.
210. Ibid.
211. Ibid.
212. Ibid.
213. Ibid.
214. Ibid.
215. Ibid.
216. Ibid.
217. Ibid.
218. Ibid.
219. Report of the Commission Appointed under the Orders of His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur dated the 12th November 1931 to Enquire into Grievances & Complaints (Jammu: Ranbir Government Press, 1932), 19.
220. Ibid.
221. Ibid., 23.
222. Ibid., 25.
223. Ibid., 38.
224. Abdulla, *Aatashe-Chinar*, 122.
225. Abdulla, *The Blazing Chinar*, 130–32.
226. Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight for Freedom (1819–1946)*, 443.
227. Kashyap Bandhu's letter to District Magistrate, Kashmir Province dated 28 April 1932, File No. 215/149-P.S., Year 1932, State Archives Repository, Jammu.

228. Prime minister's telegram dated 30 April 1932 to Maharaja Hari Singh who was camping at Palanpur (File No. 215/149-P.S., Year 1932, State Archives Repository, Jammu). The district magistrate in Srinagar sent a terse reply to Kashyap Bandhu the same day which read: "Pt. Kashyapa Bandhu and his party are, however, advised to take warning from the past experience and not to spoil the calm and peaceful atmosphere of the Province by resorting to unconstitutional methods which, as they are not unaware, are bound to do incalculable harm to the best interests of the country."
229. Kashyap Bandhu's letter to district magistrate, Kashmir Province dated 28 April 1932, File No. 215/149-P.S., Year 1932, State Archives Repository, Jammu.
230. Prem Nath Bazaz's letter, dated 30 April 1932, to the prime minister of Jammu and Kashmir, File No. 215/149-P.S., Year 1932, State Archives Repository, Jammu.
231. Prime minister's telegram, dated 2 May 1932, to Maharaja Hari Singh who was then at Kotah, File No. 215/149-P.S., Year 1932, State Archives Repository, Jammu.
232. File No. 215/149-P.S., Year 1932, State Archives Repository, Jammu.
233. Ibid.
234. Saraf, *Kashmiris Fight for Freedom (1819–1946)*, 444. Vaishnavi championed the demand of right to self-determination to decide the political fate of Kashmir and for his political views earned the nickname 'Pakistani Pandit'.
235. C. I. I. Diary Kashmir, 9 June 1924. Kilam made these remarks at a public meeting at Hazuri Bagh (Now Iqbal Park) organized by the Hindu Sahaik Sabha Srinagar. He also advised Hindus to show solidarity with the Sikhs whom he described as "the backbone of the Hindu community" (Kour, *Political Awakening in Kashmir*).
236. File No. 215/149-P.S., Year 1932, State Archives Repository, Jammu.
237. Koul, *Kashmir Then and Now (5000 BC to 1972 AD)*, 200.
238. Memorial presented by the Sanatan Dharm Youngmen's Association on behalf of Kashmiri Pandits to his Highness the Maharaja Bahadur of Jammu and Kashmir on 24 October, 1931. The Memorial was signed by Jai Lal Kilam, Prem Nath Bazaz, Kashap Bandhu, Janardhan Teng and Damodhar Bhat [Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir (1931–1940)* Appendix G, 467].
239. Biscoe, *Tyndale Biscoe in Kashmir* (Autobiography), 114.
240. Memorial submitted to the government by Jia Lal Kilam and Tej Bahadur Sapru on behalf of Sanatan Dharm Youngmen's Association Kashmir on 25 February 1933 (Khan, Appendix G, 477).
241. Report of the Commission Appointed under the Orders of his Highness the Maharaja Bahadur dated 12 November 1931 to Enquire into Grievances & Complaints (Jammu: Ranbir Government Press, 1932), 24–25.
242. *The Tribune*, 12 May 1932.
243. Ibid., 445.
244. Abdullah, *Aatash-e-Chinar*, 650.
245. Ibid., 174–75.

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- 246. Hussain, *The Wounded Paradise*, 144–45.
 - 247. Abdullah, *Aatash-e-Chinar*, 174.
 - 248. Ibid., 174–75.
 - 249. For an insightful detail about this bloodbath, read “Circa 1947: A Long Story” by Khalid Bashir Ahmad, Kashmir Life dated 2 November–8 November 2014. <http://www.kashmirlife.net/circa-1947-a-long-story-67652/>
 - 250. Abdullah, *Aatash-e-Chinar*, 437.
 - 251. Ibid., 364–65.
 - 252. Ibid., 451.
 - 253. rediff PAGES, Durga Prasad Dhar, accessed 3 January 2016, pages.rediff.com/durga-prasad-dhar/244307
 - 254. Abdullah, *Aatash-e-Chinar*, 451.
 - 255. Ibid.
 - 256. In the 20th century, Kashmir witnessed frequent *Sher-Bakra* (nick names given to supporters of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and Mirwaiz Mohammad Yusuf Shah, respectively) clashes during which the warring groups would violently fight out their differences on the streets of Srinagar city. In many cases, divorces took place among couples for spouses being supporters of rival camps.

Chapter Six

Agitation

In July 1967, Parmeshwari Handoo, a young Kashmiri Pandit girl, converted to Islam and married her Muslim colleague working at a co-operative departmental store in Srinagar. The conversion and marriage of the girl, solemnized by the Mufti Azam of Kashmir after she professed her new faith and was rechristened as Parveen Akhtar, became big news and caused a severe law and order problem and communal friction in the Valley. As days passed, the situation deteriorated and violence, claiming several lives, spiked across the Pir Panjal range to the Jammu province. Processions taken out by Kashmiri Pandits through the streets of Srinagar were complimented by protest meetings and slogan shouting by the community members in other towns and cities. Muslims, who were generally indifferent to the development, were incensed by a provocative speech by the President of the Bhartiya Jan Sangh and some other incidents of sacrilege, and held massive counter protest demonstrations. Imposition of curfew, *lathicharge* and tear gas shelling by Kashmir Armed Police (KAP) on Pandit agitators and firing by non-local police units on Muslim protesters kept Kashmir on the boil for months.

Daughter of Dhanvati and late Narayan Joo Handoo from Jogi Lankar, Rainawari, a locality predominated by Kashmiri Pandits, Parmeshwari was a salesgirl at the government-run Apna Bazar where Ghulam Rasool Kanth of Chisti Kocha, Sona Masjid in downtown Srinagar, worked as a cashier. The two developed a liking for each other and decided to take their relationship to the next level. On 20 July, the girl willingly converted to Islam and married Kanth on 28 July. A day later, she presented an affidavit before the Second Additional Munsiff, stating therein that her conversion and marriage was an act of her own free will.¹ Before her conversion, she had visited the Mufti

Azam, Mufti Bashiruddin, few times at his *Markazi Daar-ul-Fatwa* with a request to convert her to Islam.² However, each time he sent her back, advising her not to take the decision in haste but fully convince herself before taking the plunge. The Mufti, who has brought ‘thousands of willing non-Muslims into the fold of Islam’ since he was anointed as the Grand Mufti in 1958, recalls the incident thus:

Parmeshwari first came to me ten or twelve days before her conversion. I asked her if she had given a serious thought to her decision to change her faith. I told her that conversion to Islam has to be out of conviction not out of emotions. She said that she had studied Islam and was serious about becoming a Muslim. I sent her back advising her to take some more time to think and decide. A few days later, she again came with the same request and I repeated my advice. She said that while she was firm about her conversion to Islam she would consider my advice. On July 20, she came back, repeated her request to convert and submitted a written application to this effect, asserting that she was an adult, educated and taking this step out of her free will. Upon seeing her resolve and conviction, I initiated her into Islam by asking her to recite the *Kalima* after me. There were about 10–12 people present on the occasion. Few days after her conversion she came with a young Muslim boy and said that they want to marry and requested me to solemnize their marriage as a Muslim couple which I did.³

The *Weekly Roshni*, an Urdu newspaper brought out from Srinagar, published the contents of the application Parmeshwari submitted to the Mufti Azam wherein she was reported to have stated the reason why she accepted Islam as her new faith. The application read as

I, Parmeshwari Handoo, daughter of Late Niranjan Nath [Narayan Joo] Handoo, resident of Bagh Jogi Lankar, Rainawari, aged 20 years state of my own will that for a long time now my heart has been overflowing with the desire to enter the fold of Islam. The reasons for this being that I am an educated girl, have read many Islamic books and am impressed by the teachings of Islam. Accordingly, I consciously and without any coercion accept Islam, which is my yearning. I have come to you Sir, so that you introduce me to the faith of Islam and fulfil my desire.⁴

Following their marriage, Parveen Akhtar and Ghulam Rasool attended their job as usual until a few days later when the situation suddenly took an ugly turn. Jalaluddin Shah, then in his 20s, recalls that for about two weeks, there was no reaction from the Pandit community, and the couple began attending their duties after performing wedding rituals. After their marriage when they returned to the groom's house, his parents did not show any enthusiasm and father of the groom, Ghulam Hassan Kanth, in fact, gave a cold shoulder to his son for marrying a girl of another religion without her family's permission. The couple had to look for an alternate accommodation to live in.

On 3 August, Dhanvati Handoo lodged a complaint at Police Station Rainawari that her minor daughter aged 17 years was missing since 11:00 a.m., and was suspected to have been abducted by her colleague for 'immoral purposes'.⁵ Khawaja Sanaullah Bhat, editor of *Aftab*, believed that Dhanvati was instigated by some Kashmiri Pandits to lodge a police complaint and was sent to D. N. Koul, deputy inspector general (DIG) of police, who ordered registration of a case against Kanth.⁶ On 4 August, the newly converted Muslim, Parveen Akhtar, appeared in Srinagar's Jama Masjid and announced her conversion to Islam and *nikah* with Ghulam Rasool. She also offered Friday prayers in the mosque and appealed the congregation for moral support.⁷ However, on Dhanvati's police complaint, the couple was taken into custody and lodged in Maharajgunj Police Station. The first attempt of the police to take the couple in custody failed, for the girl refused to go to police station.⁸ About 200 Muslims had gathered outside the house, as they were incensed because of the attempt made by police to shift the couple to police station. Parveen Akhtar came on a window and told the gathering that she had embraced Islam of her own accord. She raised three Islamic slogans that were responded by the crowd.⁹ The situation report of the day described the incident as "significant" and "open support demonstrated by Muslims by responding to the slogans raised by the girl herself."

Next day, Bashir Ahmad Banday, circle inspector, Police Station Maharajgunj, came again, swore in the name of the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) and assured the couple that he will present them in a court of law to record their statement, upon which the two

accompanied him. However, Banday did not keep his word and took the couple to police station where “the girl was brought in contact with her mother, her maternal uncle and some elderly Kashmiri Hindus but that she adamantly refused to retrace her steps or return to her mother’s care.”¹⁰ She was later shifted to Police Station, Khanyar, with the idea of separating her from Kanth, and her mother and uncle were allowed to remain with her. There, a group of Kashmiri Pandits headed by Triloki Nath Dhar, President of the Kashmir Branch of Jan Sangh, were allowed to meet her twice.¹¹ Jan Sangh, it may be recalled, was set up in Kashmir in the wake of massive unrest following mysterious theft of the Holy Relic from the Hazratbal shrine during the intervening night of 26–27 December 1963. On 1 June 1964, Jan Sangh was launched at Srinagar in the house of Ramjo Garisaz with the appointment of an ad hoc committee, comprising Triloki Nath Dhar and Tika Lal Tapiloo. Rishi Kumar Koshal, general secretary, All Jammu and Kashmir Jan Sangh, who was accused of active involvement in Muslims massacre in Reasi in 1947, was the man behind starting the party in Kashmir. He was assisted by Ramlal Bagotra.¹²

In the meanwhile, the group led by Dhar that had met Parmeshwari later reportedly admitted before a gathering of Kashmiri Pandits that the girl insisted to go with the man whom she had married of her free will. Kanth was bailed out the same day and on the insistence of Parmeshwari, she was allowed to go with him.¹³ On investigation, the police arrived at the conclusion that the girl was major and therefore free to take her own decisions.¹⁴ Given the girl’s refusal to go with her mother, the police had no option but to let the couple go home where this time the father welcomed his son and the daughter-in-law. The Kashmiri Pandit leadership sharply reacted to the police decision to let the couple go home instead of presenting them before a court of law. Prem Nath Dogra, President, Jammu and Kashmir unit of Jan Sangh, issued a condemnatory statement. The police clarified that the girl in custody was not presented in the court on the request of her mother, maternal uncle and Gopi Kishen, President Sudhar Samiti, Trilokinath Matoo, Triloki Nath Dhar and Netrepal Shastri.¹⁵ “On their request, ample of time was given to them to persuade her to return to her mother and when these efforts failed, she was set free,” the police statement added.

The Pandit community did not like the turn of events and took to the streets, demanding the return of the ‘abducted minor girl’. Defying the restrictions imposed by the government, massive demonstrations were held and pitched battles were fought with the police, resulting in several deaths and turmoil in Kashmir. Within a few days, a private affair between two individuals became a major issue between two communities. The incident, which was reported by the *Hindustan Times* in a single column inner-page story as protest erupting over a “Hindu girl marrying a Muslim boy,” suddenly turned into “abduction of a minor Hindu girl in the national media.”¹⁶ The development was atypical, especially since interfaith marriages in Kashmir were not uncommon. Two years before Parmeshwari’s marriage, a high-profile wedlock between a Muslim physician, Syed Naseer Ahmad Shah, and a Pandit gynaecologist, Girija Dhar, had taken place without anyone raising eyebrows. Five years prior to Naseer–Girija matrimony, another known interfaith marriage took place between artist Ghulam Rasool and a Pandit girl, Santosh Mehra, and in reversal of the tradition, the groom suffixed the bride’s name with his own. Yet another well-known Muslim–Pandit marriage, solemnized in 1960s, was of Nazir Ahmad Mufti, an engineer and nephew of the Mufti Azam, and his neighbour in Wazpora, Jai Kishori, rechristened as Jawahira Mufti after her conversion to Islam and marriage. These interfaith marriages, far from creating communal tension, just became a subject of gossip.

An interfaith marriage that shook the traditionalist Kashmiri society in late 1940s involved a Muslim girl from a prominent and rich Naqshbandi family in Srinagar and Gurpurab Singh, a non-Kashmiri Sikh manager of a local cinema hall. The conservative Muslim society felt ‘shamed’ by the development but spoke about it in hushed voices only. The girl was disowned by her family and her marriage too did not last long. Subsequent to this development but prior to Parmeshwari’s marriage, another Muslim girl, Umat ul Qayoom, married a Kashmiri Pandit lawyer, Jyotshi. During the Pandit agitation over Parmeshwari issue, a statement issued by the *Markazi Daar-ul-Fatwa* was published in newspapers, giving names of 16 non-Muslims who had embraced Islam at the hands of the Mufti Azam between 23 August 1962 and 24 July 1967.¹⁷ It also included a Kashmiri Pandit, namely Moti Lal Tcheru from Anantnag, who assumed Gawhar Ahmad as his Muslim name.

He had embraced Islam four days after Parmeshwari's conversion. As the Pandit agitation had peaked, Manmohan Bhat, a Kashmiri Pandit, resident of Reshi Peer, Aali Kadal, converted to Islam and declared his new faith during a Friday congregation at the Jama Masjid. Bhat, a married man with two children and aged parents, was an X-ray technician at the Hajin Hospital in North Kashmir and had informed his colleague, Bashir Ahmad Kanth, about his desire to convert. Kanth facilitated his journey to Islam. Bhat was rechristened as Sheikh Muhammad Mansoor. His parents and wife disowned him. Later, he married a Muslim girl from Srinagar.

Marriages between two individuals belonging to different faiths in Kashmir neither began with Parmeshwari-Ghulam Rasool matrimony nor ended with it. In fact, this wedlock created a serious law and order situation and communal strife in Kashmir. Later, the state witnessed several marital tie-ups between Muslim boys and Hindu girls and in many cases, the vice versa. Iqbal Salati, Riyaz Punjabi, Fayyaz Shaharyar, Omar Abdullah (taking Hindu/Sikh spouses), Jahan Aara Naqshbandi, Shahzadi Simon, Lubna Shah, Rubina Nasrullah, Shirin Bakhshi, Sara Abdullah (marrying non-Muslim boys) are some of the post-1967 interfaith marriages that happened in Kashmir. Jagan Nath, a Pandit teacher from Rajpora in South Kashmir, converted to Islam, adopted Jalaluddin as his new name and married a Muslim girl. Importantly, interfaith marriages like these did not disturb the social scene or create any law and order situation in Kashmir.

In the case of Parmeshwari, however, Kashmiri Pandits raised a hue and cry, rampaged the streets of Srinagar for weeks on end and created a communally surcharged situation, the first of its kind in the post-1947 Kashmir. In the meanwhile, Dhanvati had moved to the court of law for nullification of the conversion and marriage of her daughter and restoration of 'the minor girl' to the custody of her mother. She was represented by a host of senior lawyers from her community, and at one stage, the hearing of the case was shifted to the Badami Bagh Cantonment for the fear of breach of peace. Pandits alleged that Parmeshwari was a minor who took up a job "under stress of extreme indigence,"¹⁸ and her alleged abductor used "all nefarious means to pressurize the virgin sales girl." The Manager of the departmental store, where the two worked, was blamed for "taking a leading part

in siding and abetting Ghulam Rasool Kant[h] Cashier in seducing the pressurised girl.”¹⁹ The Kashmir Police were accused of allowing the alleged abductor to take the girl home instead of presenting her before a court of law. Sheetal Nath, a Kashmiri Pandit stronghold in downtown Srinagar, became the protesters’ headquarter from where processions were taken out and aggressive speeches were made daily. Slogan-shouting groups marched on the streets of Srinagar and engaged in pitched battles with KAP, deployed to maintain law and order. The first reported protest meeting at Sheetal Nath was held on 7 August where among others, Shiv Narain Fotedar, Chairman, Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Council, warned his own government against the “danger that the situation might deteriorate and have repercussions in India.” The next day, Fotedar presided over a protest meeting, again, at Sheetal Nath during which an organization named Kashmir Hindu Action Committee (KHAC) was launched to spearhead an agitation for the recovery of the girl. Within 12 days of its formation, KHAC resolved, “thence onwards only the Action Committee would be the sole representative organisation [of Kashmiri Pandits] empowered to negotiate with the Government and attend to other social, economic, religious and other affairs of the community.”²⁰ Prem Nath Gassi was chosen as the President of KHAC.²¹

By 13 August, KHAC was already threatening direct actions to highlight ‘their sufferings’ and reminding everybody that while they were in minority, it “does not mean that they were weak and India was not with them.”²² Soon it became clear that the fight of a widowed mother for restoration of her ‘abducted girl’ had been hijacked by KHAC. Jumping into the fray, the right wing Jan Sangh made things worse. A public meeting held at Sheetal Nath on 13 August was presided over by Jan Sangh’s Triloki Nath Dhar. During the proceedings, Hira Lal Khazanchi, an employee of the Government Press Srinagar, made a provocative speech alleging that

Islam wanted Hindus to be converted as Muslims but [even] if only one lakh Hindus remain here nobody could end Hinduism in Kashmir. Pertinently, the total population of Kashmiri Pandits then was about 60,000 only. Khazanchi claimed that he had spoken with the Sikhs and that they were with Kashmiri Pandits in this agitation.²³

The speakers also included non-Kashmiri Hindus. One Sri Kishen from Delhi asked the audience to be ready to ‘face everything’. Amarnath from Jalandhar raised sentiments against Muslims.²⁴ Raj Ram Shastri from Andhra Pradesh also made a provocative speech during one of the series of public meetings held at Sheetal Nath. Non-local Hindus, it appeared, had mixed with the agitators. Besides, leaders of the Hindu Mahasabha, including Raghbir Shastri, MP, Professor Ram Singh and Tej Bahadur Koul also arrived in Srinagar during this period. Muslims were generally indifferent to developments unfolding in the wake of the controversial marriage. Besides the cold shoulder initially given to Kanth by his father, the community, sort of, distanced itself from the development. Senior Kashmiri leadership was not around. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and the higher leadership of the Plebiscite Front, barring its President, Mirza Afzal Beg, were in jail. Beg was banned from moving around or addressing public meetings. On 13 August, Shamboo Nath Kachroo, President of Yuvak Sabha and member of KHAC, claimed that the Plebiscite Front supported their stand and Begum Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah had condemned the conversion incident. The next day, Begum Abdullah’s support was again claimed at a public meeting at Sheetal Nath, although she later refuted the statement attributed to her.²⁵ On 18 August, *Mirwaiz* Molvi Mohammad Yasin Hamdani addressed the Friday congregation at Pampore and termed as blunder, what he called, some “foolish Muslims welcoming the development.” He reportedly described the incident as an affair between two individuals inviting the provisions of the Goonda Act.²⁶

Parmeshwari’s refusal to return to the Hindu fold angered the Kashmiri Pandit community, and its leadership intensified the agitation. KHAC under the aegis of the Yuvak Sabha and the Jan Sangh held daily demonstrations, sit-ins and *satyagraha* during which young community members in the batches of five courted arrests on a daily basis. Processions were taken out in which thousands of men, women, old and young members of the community participated. On many occasions, women formed the vanguard of processions and sit-ins to save men from police batons. The community support for the agitation was total. Pandit shopkeepers closed their shops. The state and union government officials from the community boycotted their

work and joined the processions, made speeches and raised slogans against the G. M. Sadiq government and made inflammatory utterances about the Muslim community. Kashmiri Pandit boys and girls bunked classes to join the processions. Amarnath Vaishnavi, a teacher at Government MPHS School, Bagh-i-Dilawar Khan, actively participated in processions, made anti-government speeches and joined KHAC as its member. Mohan Lal Bengali, Makhan Lal Vaishnavi, Kashi Nath and Bansi Lal Gohan, employees of the Government Joinery Mill, Pampore, absented themselves from duty and joined the agitation in Srinagar. Avtar Krishan Sapru, an employee of the Jammu and Kashmir University, took active part in the agitation and distributed black badges among Pandit employees of the university. Rajinder Nath, Fire Station Officer, Anantnag, made a speech against police on 20 August. Nila Kanth Hak, Chairman of Advisory Board for Preventive Detention, was reported in police diary as making propaganda against the Chief Minister and the Chief Secretary. He was also reported to be holding secret meetings at his residence where he criticized and passed derogatory remarks against them. Shiv Narain Fotedar, holding a very high constitutional position, became the guide, philosopher and mentor of the agitators. Fotedar, a Pandit chauvinist, earlier in 1937 was alleged to have passed blasphemous remarks about the Prophet of Islam in a speech at Sheetal Nath that was carried by the Pandit community newspaper, the *Martand*,²⁷ creating huge resentment among the Muslim majority population. They demanded the arrest of Fotedar and action against the newspaper, but the government looked the other way and both got away with their mischiefs. Fotedar's moral fibre was at display in his famous quote: "My ambition of life is to become a Minister whether by backdoor or by frontdoor."²⁸

On 16 August 1967, about 300 Hindu students of the Regional Engineering College went on a strike. The same day, about 150 Hindu girls of the Government Women's College, Maulana Azad Road, took out a procession through Ganpatyar, Habbakadal and Kanikadal, raising slogan *Hum goli khayeinge behan ko wapas layeinge* (We will face bullets but will get back our sister). In Gandhi College, Hindu students boycotted classes and took out processions. KHAC gave a strike call for 25 August, asking Kashmiri Pandit government

employees and students to be absent from work and educational institutions. The impact of the call was near total. In the Civil Secretariat, only five non-Muslim officials attended their duties while in the Accountant General's office, only three Pandit officials were present. As many as 28 Kashmiri Pandit employees, including Nurses of the Chest Diseases Hospital, Drugjan, remained on leave. Wearing black badges, the Kashmiri Pandit employees of the Telephone Exchange in Srinagar that had nearly 100 per cent Pandit officials allegedly tapped telephones of ministers, police officers and media persons and passed on vital information to the leaders of the agitation.²⁹

The issue of the alleged abduction was also raised in the State Assembly where the Chief Minister made a detailed statement on 17 August. Sadiq presented the sequence of events and assured that doubts raised about the police conclusions and the alleged coercion on the girl at her workplace would be looked into and action would be taken, if the allegations were established. He, however, pointed out that the matter was a subject of judicial proceedings in a court and "an agitational approach to matters while they are sub judice is not conducive to a civilised way of life and is therefore unjustified."³⁰ Sadiq disclosed that the government had unearthed a deep conspiracy to start communal riots in Kashmir. He also said that documents, dairies relating to the conspiracy and arms in large quantity were recovered.³¹ The revelation came close on the heels of a widespread rumour that arms were recovered from houses of some Pandits during search operations. The Chief Minister also made a reference to the alleged grievances of Kashmiri Pandits "sought to be linked up with the current situation" and reminded, "Grievances should not be thrashed out in the market place but through recognised forums." He, however, made it clear that the freedom of conscience was one of the fundamental rights enshrined in the constitution and its exercise within the constitutional framework had to be upheld.³² The Chief Minister's assurance and appeal only evoked rejection by the Pandits, intensifying the agitation.

As protests gained momentum, there occurred some incidents that could have triggered communal violence, but thankfully the majority community resisted the provocations made by some elements to flare up sentiments. A rumour spread in the city that the holy relic housed

in the Hazratbal shrine was mentioned in a derogatory manner during a public meeting held at Sheetal Nath on 14 August. A day later, a Muslim spectator was allegedly beaten up and taken into custody at the same venue. Another report said that four Muslims were captured by Pandits and when a large crowd demanded their release, it was alleged that they had come to sprinkle acid on the Pandit gathering. On 17 August, a curious Muslim boy, Altaf Hussain, son of Abdul Salam Wani of Kalashpora, Srinagar, had climbed a tree in the Sheetal Nath premises to watch the proceedings. A non-Kashmiri, mentioned in the situation report as a Punjabi Hindu, enquired about him and when told that he was a Muslim, forcibly brought him down from the tree and tried to drown him in the Nalla Mar. However, some Pandits did not let him do so. Still, he caught hold of his arm and dragged him up to the gate, where he reportedly tried to stab him. Some Muslim boys, who were present on the gate, apprehended the mischief and raised slogans upon which more Muslims came to the spot. A Head Constable of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), who was on the spot, tactfully took the man to Police Division, Kral Khud, where a large crowd followed him. During body search, "a dagger and Military card (Identity Card)"³³ was recovered from his possession. A newspaper report identified the accused as 'Jaswant of Uttar Pradesh Police in civics' and claimed that the recovered weapons included two daggers and a pistol.³⁴

The incident triggered panic and rumours that the Jan Sangh workers were attacking Muslims with daggers. Agitated Muslims raised slogans *Jan Sangh Ko Khatam Karo* (Eliminate the Jan Sangh) and *Hamla aawar khabardaar, Hum ladnay ko hain tayyar* (Attackers, beware, we are ready to fight!). Shopkeepers downed shutters amid rumours that Muslims had been killed with daggers. Amid these developments, a report came that two college lecturers, H. L. Bhan and P. N. Koul, had supplied acid to three students, namely Vijay Kumar son of P. N. Raina, Bushan Lal Khabri son of Jaggar Nath Khabri and Ashok Kumar Bhan son of Shamboo Nath Bhan. Earlier, on 19 August, one Prem Nath son of Ishar Dass of Gankhan, Zaina Kadal, had been heard telling people that in the morning some filth was found to have been thrown on *Mahakali Astapan* at Khanqah-i-Mualla. He had asked the priest of the shrine to report the matter to

the Pandits. Later, Ghulam Mohiuddin Hamdani quoted Balbadur, a retired police officer allegedly working for the intelligence bureau, as repeating the same allegation and the priest of the shrine in the presence of the latter categorically denying anything like that having taken place. On 21 August, a handwritten poster was seen pasted on the wall of a mosque in Daulat Abad, Nowpora, containing derogatory language against Muslims and their Prophet (peace be upon him). The poster was removed by a local resident, Ramzan Dar son of Subhan Dar. A police officer, Hassan Shah Kirmani, reportedly advised the enraged people not to give any importance to the poster, as it could be the handiwork of some mischief monger. On the same day, a rumour spread that some Kashmiri Pandits had tried to set ablaze a mosque adjacent to Durga Patshala in Bana Mohalla. The police rushed to the spot. Rumours that the Jan Sangh was creating trouble in Kashmir were gaining ground, and the workers of the organization were blamed of attacking Muslims during nocturnal raids.

Amidst mounting resentment against the Jan Sangh, its State President, Prem Nath Dogra, in a statement issued on 13 August, disassociated the party from the issue of Parmeshwari's conversion and marriage and described it as a matter related to an individual. He said that he had prohibited his workers to meddle with it.³⁵ Notwithstanding Dogra's distancing from the Pandit agitation, the "Jan Sangh had infiltrated into it."³⁶ The developments happening, as they did one after the other, had caused a groundswell of anger among the members of the majority Muslim community that exploded on 22 August. That day, Balraj Madhok, President of Bhartiya Jan Sangh, arrived in Kashmir and without losing time drove to Sheetal Nath where he made a provocative speech. He spoke on the issues that were not associated with the ongoing developments, such as Kashmir being integral part of India since ages and accession of Jammu and Kashmir being final, and said that holding of a plebiscite was impossible. However, what took the lid off the pent-up anger of Muslims was his suggestion to them to vacate Kashmir and go to Pakistan, if they harp on the demand for plebiscite. The speech was an intentional provocation and it worked. Srinagar quickly erupted against Madhok and Jan Sangh. Protest meetings, processions and slogan-shouting marches on the streets of Srinagar ensued. In the words of Brij Krishan

Dass, who was arrested and lodged in jail during a Kashmiri Pandit demonstration, Madhok delivered a venomous speech and gave the peaceful agitation a communal tinge. "Parmeshwari agitation had nothing to do with Pakistan, but ignition was enough to make the agitation communal."³⁷

To protest against the controversial speech, Muslim students boycotted educational institutions on the following day and demanded Madhok's quick eviction from Kashmir. On the other hand, the Jan Sangh leader, Tika Lal Tapiloo, addressed a protest meeting at Sheetal Nath and threatened that the Pandit agitation would not only continue but gain momentum if the girl was not restored immediately. At another protest meeting held at the Raghunath Mandir, Baramulla, one speaker, Ravinder Nath Kilam, said that the Hindus would answer the bullets of the government with bullets. On the other hand, the Plebiscite Front advised restraint and asked people to remain vigilant against elements out to disturb communal harmony. The Front emphasized that Parmeshwari had converted to Islam of her own accord and the agitation started over this issue was meant to create communal disturbance. The government was asked to curb the agitation. A meeting of the Anjuman-e-Tehafuz-e-Islam (Organization for Protection of Islam), held at the Khanqah-i-Mualla, declared that the marriage of Parmeshwari was in accordance with *Shariah* and if any violation of it takes place, all the Islamic organization would be ready to undergo any sacrifice.

On 24 August, the situation turned hot by a series of protest demonstrations and slogan shouting against Madhok. Shops were closed and government and private buses were stopped from plying in the city. Muslim students of Sri Pratap College held a demonstration in the college ground. Later, about 600 students of the college marched in procession towards Lal Chowk, shouting slogans against Madhok and demanding his immediate eviction from Kashmir. Another procession started from Khanqah-i-Mualla and marched towards Amira Kadal, raising pro-Islam and anti-Jan Sangh slogans. About 100 Muslim students took out a procession from Motiyar and marched towards Jogi Lankar. The procession criss-crossed Lal Chowk. The target of the public anger was Balraj Madhok and his party. A gathering of about 4,000 protestors was addressed, among others, by Aya Singh Baghi

who lambasted Madhok and said that he had no business to address Kashmiri Pandits and ask Kashmiri Muslims to go to Pakistan. He alleged that the Jan Sangh leader had come to Kashmir on the invitation of some vested interests. A procession of women raised slogans, *Jan Sangh hai hai* (Shame on Jan Sangh) and *Islam Zinadabad* (Long live Islam!). A procession of students marched towards Amira Kadal and raised slogans, *Ye mulk hamara hai, iska faisla hum karenge* (This is our country, and we will decide its future), *Idiot Madhok murdabad* (Death to Madhok, the idiot!), *Parveen Akhtar Zindabad* (Long live Parveen Akhtar!), *Jan Sangh murdabad* (Death to Jan Sangh!) and *Jis Kashmir ko khoon se seencha, wo Kashmir hamara hai* (Kashmir nurtured with our blood belongs to us). Another slogan-shouting procession emerged from Rainawari. A gathering of about 200 people shouted anti-Jan Sangh and anti-Madhok slogans at the Court Road. From Kukar Bazar, a procession of children marched towards Lal Chowk. They were carrying a *mashaal* and shouting anti-Madhok slogans. A procession of about 1,000 women, which later swelled to about 6,000, burnt the effigy of Madhok at Haba Kadal. A crowd of about 200 Pandit girls assembled at the nearby Krala Khud Chowk and raised pro-Madhok slogans. The crowd latter swelled to about 4,000 after more men and women joined in. The police did not allow the crowd to move forward lest a show down between the two communities took place.

The largest protest demonstration of the day was held at Lal Chowk. A crowd of around 10,000 Muslims soon swelled to almost 20,000. Several leaders of the Plebiscite Front, including Sadruddin Mujahid, Molvi Mohammad Yasin Hamdani, Khawaja Ali Shah and Hakim Mohiuddin, addressed the agitated gathering. Hamdani described Madhok as “killer of innumerable Muslims in whose heart communal feelings had found permanent place.” Mujahid condemned the Jan Sangh leader for “speaking in a tone as if he had conquered Kashmir.” Slogans like *Jan Sangh hai hai* and *Balraj Madhok murdabad* rent the air. A procession of about 15,000 marched towards Fateh Kadal. Earlier in the day, word had spread that the court had declared Parmeshwari a major and allowed her to go with her husband. The news was greeted with joy and Muslim women at various points en route showered flower petals on the procession, distributed sweets

and sang traditional merry songs over, what they termed, success in the Parveen Akhtar case. A crowd of 1,500 people assembled at the residence of Ghulam Rasool Kanth, showered his house with flowers and candies and felicitated him.

On 24 August, a closed-door meeting held at the *Auqaf* office of the Khanqah-i-Mualla resulted in the formation of the Muslim Muthida Mahaz (Muslim United Front; MUF), with Molvi Muhammad Yasin Hamdani as its President.³⁸ As the leaders of the *Mahaz* came out of the meeting, a crowd of about 10,000 had gathered at the Khanqah-i-Mualla, which was addressed by Maulana Qasim Shah Bukhari, Mufti Jalaluddin, Ghulam Mohiuddin Hamdani, Mufti Bashiruddin, Sadruddin Mujahid and Sufi Ahmad of *Mirwaiz* Molvi Farooq's Awami Action Committee. The speakers praised the majority community of Kashmir for being patient and controlling their sentiments in the face of provocations. They were advised to maintain communal harmony in accordance with their long tradition. Madhok was accused of having got Mahatma Gandhi killed and Muslim men, women and children massacred at Jabalpur.³⁹ Among the first demands made by the *Mahaz* was his eviction from Kashmir as he had "made an irresponsible speech and endangered peace here." It also demanded the immediate release of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and other jailed leaders. The first decision of the *Mahaz* was a call for complete shut down on 25 August and holding of a public meeting at the Hazratbal shrine. During the public meeting, a Muslim boy, allegedly attacked and injured by some members of the minority community at Haba Kadal, was brought on the stage. The sight of the injured boy raised tempers, but the leaders asked people to remain calm.

The public meeting adopted a six-point resolution, that (a) cautioned the government about the possibility of breach of communal harmony, if the Parveen Akhtar case was not handled properly; (b) condemned Balraj Madhok for his provocative and poisonous speech; (c) demanded that Madhok should be turned out of the State forthwith and in order to maintain communal harmony in future, the government should not allow entry of such persons in the State; (d) demanded, in the interest of peace, immediate release of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, Molvi Muhammad Farooq, Sofi Mohammad Akbar, Mohiuddin Karra and other prisoners and lifting of ban on

the movement of Mirza Afzal Beg so that he is in a position to tour the valley and give solace to people whose feelings have been injured by Madhok's speech; (e) decided to utilize all resources to maintain communal harmony and (f) decided to knock down the impious tactics of the communal minded leaders. An agitated gathering of about 1,500 people burnt a firecracker-stuffed effigy of Madhok at the Badshah Chowk.

Concurrent with the Khanqah-i-Mualla public meeting, a rally was held at Sheetal Nath where a Pandit woman, Dulari Koul, recited a poem to infuse fresh vigour among young men and women of her community. The congregation raised provocative slogans, instigating the gathering. The Special Report (A) of the Police, forwarded by the superintendent of police, Srinagar, to the Chief Secretary and other senior ranking officers of the government read:

On 25-8-67 Division Office Kralkhud sent a written report from Sheetal Nath through a messenger addressed to Office Incharge P. S. Sherghari purporting therein that on that day at about 16.15 hrs. a huge gathering of Hindus indulged in raising of objectionable slogans thereby infuriating the mob to finish up the Muslims. By declaring their intension through shoutings [sic], the Police on duty asked the Hindus to abstain from such acts which were likely to create communal trouble. Upon this the Hindu mob attacked the Police contingent with stones inflicting several injuries on its members. The Hindus also declared openly to wipe off the Muslims. Messers Bunesh s/o Mahender Nath Raina r/o Jawahir Nagar, Rajender Nath s/o Jagar Nath r/o Chota Bazar, Autar Krishen Koul s/o Maheshwar Nath Koul r/o Chota Bazar, Surrender Nath s/o Radha Krishen and Tej Krishen Koul s/o Balji r/o Karan Nagar were arrested on the spot. A 'Churri' with yellow and black handle, having the words 'Peetal Narest' and '2 M.P.' written over it was recovered from the possession of Bunesh Raina. Upon the receipt of this information a case under section 41 DIR/148/353/332/188 RPC was registered and the investigation thereof entrusted to a team of investigating staff headed by Shri A. G. Mufti, Dy. S. P. CID, Crime.⁴⁰

The 'Special Report' described the incident as sixth special case of its nature and the eleventh registered during the current year within the

jurisdiction of Police Station Sherghari. Makhan Lal Harkara, member of KHAC, also, spoke at the Sheetal Nath gathering and dubbed the Muslim processions as “hordes of goondas who hold demonstrations and shout provocative slogans.” He used abusive language against Chief Minister Sadiq and called him “the most fanatic and communal Muslim.”⁴¹ Harkara demanded that if the government did not treat Kashmiri Pandits honourably, it should make arrangements for their evacuation from Kashmir. However, in the same breath, he said that they would rather die than leave the land of their ancestors. Elsewhere, Sham Sain, a resident of Uri, threatened self-immolation “if the government did not accept our demand within one week.”⁴²

As communal polarization was building up, some more worrisome incidents happened in the city. At least three Muslim families of sweepers, living in the Pandit dominated Mandir Bagh, Nai Sadak, were allegedly threatened by members of the minority community and, in panic, they abandoned their houses. Ten Muslim families also migrated from Ganpatyar, another predominantly Pandit area, in the wake of growing communal tension. Four Kashmiri Pandit families migrated from Naqashpora amid fear. An injured Muslim boy, Ali Mohammad Mala, son of Ghulam Qadir Mala of Krala Khud, was admitted to a hospital after allegedly being attacked by some members of the other community. A Kashmiri Pandit woman from Fateh Kadal rushed to Haba Kadal and informed the people gathered there that her son was beaten up by Muslims. On 24 August, a non-Kashmiri Hindu from Jammu was apprehended at the Kashmir Motor Drivers’ Association (KMDA) Bus Stand with a dagger. He was taken into custody and handed over to Police Station Kothibagh. The next day, Customs Post Batwara seized a box of daggers from a truck with Jammu registration number 2385 JKN. A large crowd pelted stones on shops of Triloki Nath Dhar, President of the Srinagar unit of the Jan Sangh and Kundan Lal for allegedly sheltering some workers of the Sangh there.

Tension also gripped the Regional Engineering College, Srinagar, where about 200 Muslim students assembled on a holiday alleging that the Hindu students of the college had sheltered some armed Jan Sangh workers in the hostel. Groups of Hindus and Muslims at the opposite banks of the Jhelum at Ganpatyar and Zaindar Mohalla, Tankipora,

respectively, engaged themselves in an abusive verbal fight, causing a tense situation. Pandits alleged that a KAP man had pushed a Pandit woman who lay injured and unconscious. Abdur Rashid, Division Officer, Police Division Krala Khud, who reached on the spot along with his men, was slapped by an agitated Kashmiri Pandit. Rumours making rounds in the city suggested that houses of Muslims in Pehli Teng, Sheetal Nath, had been looted, and a Muslim girl abducted at Ganpatyar was reportedly kept in a house. Some Muslims followed Mohan Lal, son of Badri Nath of Bohri Kadal, and Niranjan Nath of Rainawari from Nawpora to Khanyar. They were alleged to be carrying a bottle of acid and were severely beaten up by the police and later taken to a hospital.

The agitation reportedly claimed its first blood in the death of Gopi Nath Handoo on 15 August. KHAC claimed that he was earlier injured in police *lathicharge* on 11 August.⁴³ However, official situation reports from 7 August to 31 August do not mention any casualty on 11 August, not the least by this name. Neither did the KHAC publication report mentioned any agitator being seriously injured in police action that day. The second death, which according to official situation reports was the first, occurred on 24 August when Hriday Nath Mattoo, an employee of the Accountant General's Office and a resident of Bagh Jogilankar, Rainawari, succumbed to his injuries. The official situation report claimed that Mattoo had been injured by a teargas shell and was admitted in the SMHS Hospital, wherefrom he was discharged after being given the required treatment. His family alleged that he was mercilessly beaten by a group of people at Nawpora and readmitted in the hospital in a serious condition where he passed away. KHAC, however, alleged that after being mercilessly beaten up by 'hooligans', Mattoo "fell into the hand of the Kashmir Armed Police and the Govt. [Government] paid agents who worsened his condition."⁴⁴ He allegedly fainted and was taken to the Police Station Khanyar where, after regaining consciousness, he was subjected to 'vicious interrogation'. Mattoo died after he was removed to a hospital in 'extreme critical condition'.

27 August proved to be costlier in terms of human loss. That day, two more injured Kashmiri Pandits died. Maharaj Krishen Razdan, a teenager from Badyar Payeen, breathed his last in the Rattan Rani

Hospital where he had been admitted after receiving injuries during a police *lathicharge*. Another casualty was Lassa Koul Badami son of Govind Koul, a resident of Kharyar, who succumbed to injuries sustained by him after being hit by a teargas shell while he had gone out to fetch milk from the market. Besides the two fatal casualties that shot up tempers, 27 August also proved to be a violent day. The funeral procession of Razdan, permitted by the Government in relaxation of curfew imposed in the city, was joined en route by many others and its number swelled to about 5,000.⁴⁵ However, an official press release put the number between 10,000 and 12,000. The body was wrapped in the Indian Tricolour.⁴⁶ The face of the body was left uncovered, possibly to excite sentiments. Jalaluddin Shah, who witnessed the funeral procession at Haba Kadal, saw the CRP throwing a protective cover around it while some personnel at the head of the procession marched with their weapons pointing down as if to indicate mourning.

When the procession reached Karan Nagar, near the cremation site, about 500–600 youth allegedly snatched helmets and batons from the KAP personnel who were present on the road leading to the Neelam Cinema. They also pelted stones at the police party and shouted the slogan: *Police ko khatam karo* (Finish the police). Some police personnel and pedestrians were injured while a wireless fitted vehicle was damaged.⁴⁷ Some Muslim passersby, *tongawallas* and cyclists were also beaten up. A deputy superintendent of police, chased by processionists, saved his life by running away from the scene. The injured persons ran towards Shaheedganj where enraged Muslims of the locality came out, causing communal tension in the area. A uniformed police constable was attacked near the National High School by a group of people carrying axes and *lathis*, and Abdul Hamid Bhat of Home Guards, who was attached with the CID, was roughed up. In an incident, perhaps the first of its kind in Kashmir, two rifles were snatched from KAP personnel at Karan Nagar.⁴⁸

The surcharged atmosphere resulted in several incidents of arson. On return from the cremation site, the agitators allegedly set on fire two houses at Karan Nagar, belonging to Ghulam Muhammad Chisti and Trilokinath Gorkhu, situated very close to each other.⁴⁹ The house of Peer Yahya Sidiqi, Member Legislative Assembly, also suffered some

damage because of fire. Some shops of Muslims were also looted at Kani Kadal, while the shop of a fruit seller, Abdullah Pampori, on the Kani Kadal–Karan Nagar crossing was torched. In retaliation, Pandit Shamboo Nath Peshin's two shops were set ablaze. Five shops belonging to Muslims were torched at Karan Nagar and some houses were pelted with stones.⁵⁰ An official communication listed, among the houses and shops set on fire on 27 August, two houses of Chistis and Gurkhus and shops of Muhammad Abdulla Pampori, Muhammad Yusuf Maliyar, another fruit vendor, Ram Chand, Baker (the three shops belonged to the *Augaf* Committee, Masjid Chota Bazar) and Pandit Shamboo Nath Peshin's two shops, one under his own use and the other rented out to Ghulam Muhammad Ahangar.⁵¹ As the situation in the city turned serious, the Government clamped curfew and called the army to assist the police in maintaining law and order. Eight FIRs were registered in Police Station Shergarhi in connection with arson and other disturbances taking place on 27 August. Amid tension, on 28 August, news came about the death of another injured, Prem Nath Bhan son of Lachhman Joo Bhan, a resident of Drabyar Haba Kadal, who had sustained injuries the previous day.

By now, the agitation had spilled over the Pir Panjal to Jammu. Three Muslim girls were abducted from the province. Later, on 31 August, Bharat Bhushan, Divisional Commissioner Jammu, disclosed at a press conference that two of the three girls belonging to Doda district were recovered while search for the third belonging to Reasi, then part of Udhampur district, was on.⁵² Pertinently, on 18 August, a secret meeting was held at Reasi in which one Ram Saran had volunteered himself for abducting a Muslim girl.⁵³ In Jammu city, about 1,500 people took out a procession from Purani Mandi in Jammu city, which was led by Dr Nand Lal, Shiv Dass Mehta, Radha Krishen Book Seller and Amar Nath Gupta, city secretary Jan Sangh. Most of the processionists carried black flags and wore black badges. They raised slogans like *Nabalag ladki ko wapas karo* (Return the minor girl), *Mulzim ko phansi do* (Hang the accused) and *Kashmir ko doosra Pakistan mat banao* (Do not convert Kashmir into second Pakistan).

On 25 August, violent demonstrations were held in Jammu in support of KHAC during which properties of Muslims were attacked. Chief Secretary, P. K. Dhavé, said that three hotels were looted and

their furniture set ablaze. Some houses were stoned and a printing press was damaged.⁵⁴ However, damage to properties of Muslims in Jammu city was greater than what Dhavé disclosed. For Khalid Hussain, a witness to these incidents, these were the first targeted attacks on Muslims of Jammu after the gruesome anti-Muslim violence of 1947. At least 14 shops were burnt at the Residency Road, Kanak Mandi and Panj Bakhtiar Road, including 4 belonging to Chowdhary Moula Bakhsh, a wealthy Muslim who had earlier married a Hindu girl. Members of the Gujjar community and Kashmiri labourers were severely beaten up. Gujjar women were molested while they were coming to the old city from across the Tawi to sell milk and firewood.

Violent mobs and the police fought pitched battles during which the latter were heavily pelted with stones, in many cases, from rooftops and secret shelters in the lanes of the affected areas. A Muslim religious place and a rifle and ammunition shop of Abduz Aziz were ransacked upon which the police fired some shots in the air to disperse the rampaging mob. A tailoring shop and a *dhaba* were also looted. As the situation deteriorated, the army was deployed to restore peace in the affected areas of City Chowk, Ghas Mandi, Lakhdata Bazar, Pir Mitha, Tehsil Road, Shahidi Chowk and Raghunath Chowk.⁵⁵ On 29 August, a ‘funeral’ procession was taken out from Raghunath Temple to the cremation ground in the memory of the Pandits killed in Kashmir. It comprised about 1,300 people from different communities, including some Muslims, notably Syed Nazir Ahmad Samnani, ex-Member of Parliament, and Sheikh Abdur Rehman, and shouted slogans *Bharat Mata ki jai* (Victory be to Mother India) and *Kashmir ke shaheed amar rahain* (Long live Kashmir’s martyrs). All district and tehsil headquarters where Jan Sangh had dominant influence observed a *hartal*.

Jan Sangh held regular public meetings at the Purani Mandi grounds where speakers highlighted alleged excesses on Kashmiri Pandits in the Valley. Each day, one member of the community was brought on the stage to inform the gathering about alleged excesses, including abduction of Pandit women in Kashmir, on that particular day. Minister for Revenue and Rehabilitation, Girdhari Lal Dogra, flew from Srinagar and in a meeting with the members of the Muslim community, the target of violence, said that the incidents of loots and

arsons had injured the sentiments of all sane people and mentally and spiritually tortured the Chief Minister and his colleagues.⁵⁶

Back home, although slogans of Hindu–Muslim unity were raised during protest demonstrations in Srinagar and other towns, KHAC could not hide its mistrust in the majority community and the constitutional authorities and offices held by its members. The Speaker of the State Assembly, disallowing debate on alleged police *lathicharge* on a particular day, was criticized as “the creature of the party in power.”⁵⁷ The two judges who did not pass orders on the lines KHAC would have wanted were damned as “products of this [Muslim] mentality.”⁵⁸ KHAC also had problems with Parmeshwari being taken to a Police Station Maharajgunj where the officer-in-charge was a Muslim and with later shifting her to Police Station Khanyar in the vicinity of “the headquarters of anti-India organisation [the reference being to the residence of the then Jamat-i-Islami chief, Qari Saifuddin] and a place where not a single Hindu resides.”⁵⁹

Besides Chief Minister G. M. Sadiq presenting the government’s point of view in the State Assembly on the issue of the alleged abduction and the following agitation, speeches made by other Muslim members, such as former Prime Minister, Khwaja Shamsuddin, Syed Mir Qasim and Shamim Ahmad Shamim, displayed “the working of the morbid mind.”⁶⁰ Shamim, an independent member of the Assembly and journalist who had met Parmeshwari and published her interview in his newspaper, quoted her as saying that she had converted to Islam of her own accord. The interview earned him displeasure of the Pandits and the tag of being the Secretary of the Plebiscite Front,⁶¹ a resistance organization he never was associated with. Prejudice against the majority community flowed through the text of the 58-page booklet, *Wail of the Vale: Kashmir Stinks*, KHAC published over the Parmeshwari incident and the subsequent agitation. The Holy Relic movement of 1963–64, when tens of thousands of grieved Muslim protestors came out in the streets of the Valley every day, was played down as the “holy relic excitement.”⁶² Thousands of Muslims, mostly college students, protesting against Madhok’s provocative speech, were no more than “unsophisticated Muslim masses”⁶³ and “stirred to arrange hartal and express resentment in a violent attitude.”⁶⁴ An alleged incident of three ‘hooligans’ entering

a house at Ali Kadal and misbehaving with women was presented as "The majority community became so bold as to intrude into the Hindu houses even during day time."⁶⁵

Leading newspapers published from Delhi, such as the *Times of India*, the *Hindustan Times* and the *Indian Express*, highlighted alleged grievances of the Pandit community and police excesses. Barring the *Patriot*, which was represented by Mohammad Sayeed Malik, all newspapers published from outside Kashmir had their reporters in Srinagar from the Pandit community or, in one or two cases, their non-local co-religionists. Because of this, statements of KHAC received liberal coverage. Within Kashmir as well, newspapers added fuel to the fire. A majority of the newspapers published by the members of the Pandit community circulated the KHAC agenda. On 23 September, Anwar Karim, Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, invited editors of local newspapers and appealed them not to highlight rumours and news that is likely to increase communal tension. However, the appeal was not heeded and on 9 October, the government banned six newspapers for two months.⁶⁶

All India Radio (AIR) too twisted news to present facts as twisted. In its news bulletin on the morning of 28 August, AIR reported that curfew was imposed in Srinagar "after clashes resulting from an attack on a Hindu funeral procession." The Chief Secretary had to impress upon AIR to verify reports before airing them. Prem Nath Gassi and other members of KHAC camped in Delhi for several days where they met the Prime Minister and the Home Minister of India and issued daily statements to the press. On 17 August, the *Indian Express* carried his following statement, giving what the newspaper described as the "picture of the conditions of the State":

In town of Srinagar a Hindu girl cannot go to a school or a college freely because she is being insulted on the streets by the anti-national elements and in a number of cases Hindu girls are being openly teased and in some cases their clothes were torn. Some of these miscreants were alleged to be in league with persons in authority in the State. They are also abused and molested.... The result of all this is that hundreds of girls belonging to the minority community find it difficult and almost impossible to go to schools and colleges.

The news report further alleged that attempts were made to ‘burn Hindu houses’ and ‘punitive action’ was taken against the Hindu officers and employees of the state government, and concluded with painting a situation where it was “impossible for the minority community to live in honour and exercise their fundamental rights as Indian citizens.” As already observed, Muslims, far from reacting against the Kashmiri Pandits, were till then indifferent to the developments taking place following the conversion and marriage of the Pandit girl. However, publication of such reports in the mainstream Indian media angered Muslims. During a discussion in the Assembly, MLA and chief of the ruling Congress Party in Jammu and Kashmir, Syed Mir Qasim, observed:

The issue relating to Parveen Akhtar is being highlighted in the country in such a manner as if a small innocent girl has been kidnapped by Muslims and forcibly held at an unknown place. By giving this impression passions are being flared throughout the country. Newspapers circulate a feeling that a minuscule Hindu minority is at the mercy of a large Muslim majority and the lives, honour and property of the former are in perpetual danger.⁶⁷

Journalists from the Kashmiri Pandit community, influenced by the prevailing unrest, sent “elaborate reports out of all proportion to the importance of the agitation.”⁶⁸ In the words of veteran Kashmiri Pandit journalist, politician and author, Prem Nath Bazaz:

Some Pandit correspondents could not resist the temptation of circulating exaggerated and untruthful items with anti-Muslim slant by resorting to the device of putting statements in the mouth of Action Committee leaders. The correspondents seemed to believe for the first time that it was none of their responsibility to verify the statements given by the leaders. A responsible daily of New Delhi, usually sober, thus sensationalised the story that money was distributed by a minister among the Muslim goondas to attack Hindus on 24th August. A hand written poster warning Hindus to leave the Valley too was given wide publicity though numerous such posters had been appearing on Srinagar walls alleged to have been written by non-existent yet bombastically named organisations of Hindu *virs* and Muslim *mujahids*.⁶⁹

Mir Qasim denounced attempts at converting someone's willing conversion and marriage into a religious or national dispute.⁷⁰ However, influenced by newspaper reports, Hari Bhaskar Bhide, Organizing Secretary of the All India Hindu Mahasabha, alleged, "The condition of the Hindus in Kashmir is not different from that of the Hindus in East Pakistan [now Bangladesh]."⁷¹ The 'extensive and provocative publicity' given to the agitation had its fallout outside Kashmir. In the words of Bazaz:

Jan Sangh leaders made attempts to create disorder in various cities. Jagatguru Shankaracharya of Puri extended a helping hand. At Jammu the Jan Sanghis were successful in rousing Dogra Hindus and some property of Muslims was looted and burnt. The situation was saved from deteriorating further by the timely intervention of the indefatigable group of progressive socialists who heroically defended the Muslim minority. Not only did the few Pandit organizations in big cities like Jammu, Delhi, Calcutta and Chandigarh become active but also new bodies were hurriedly formed by Pandits in towns and villages in India where even a few of them lived. Resolutions were passed supporting the Pandit agitation in Srinagar and demanding Indian Government to intervene. The Indian press opened its hospitable columns to publish these reports. The agitation thus got the importance which it did not deserve.⁷²

Amid this noise created across India, Home Minister Y. B. Chavan arrived in Srinagar on 2 September to take stock of the situation. Earlier, Union Minister Inder Kumar Gujral, parliamentary delegations and Home Secretary L. P. Singh had also visited Srinagar. Chavan's visit was preceded by a Government of India communication to the Chief Secretary of Jammu and Kashmir in which the agitation on the alleged abduction of Parmeshwari was referred to as "protest against a mixed marriage."⁷³ Added to this, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had reportedly lashed out at the leaders of the Pandit agitation who had gone to New Delhi to present their case before her. Quoting sources privy to the meeting, the *Weekly Aaina* claimed that never before was Mrs Gandhi seen so infuriated.⁷⁴ She reportedly did not let the Pandit leaders speak a word and told them that they had caused an irreparable loss to the country. Sources close to the

Prime Minister were quoted as saying that for the first time a delegation had been treated like that at the Prime Minister's residence and its members were not even offered a customary cup of tea.⁷⁵

In Srinagar, Chavan met several delegations, including those of KHAC and MUF, ministers and parliamentarians of different political parties, independent members of the State legislature, Muslim traders and Pandit individuals. He did not take long to grasp the issue and advised KHAC to "withdraw the agitation forthwith and help the authorities in restoring an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity."⁷⁶ After initial obstinacy as face saving tactic, KHAC agreed to withdraw the agitation and an understanding was arrived at between the agitation leaders and the Home Minister. The state government agreed to release all the persons arrested and detained in connection with the agitation and order withdrawal of any punitive action taken or in the process of being taken against persons involved with the agitation. On the issue of the alleged abduction of the Pandit girl, the Home Minister advised KHAC to allow due process of law to take its normal course. The allegations of excesses committed by the police were agreed to be properly examined.

There was nothing peculiar in the agreement that was not there in the assurance given by Sadiq on the floor of the State Assembly on 31 August. However, since the KHAC leadership had to conceal its embarrassment, it made two false announcements on 3 September at the Sheetal Nath gathering: (a) the agitation had been suspended only for 10 days and (b) Parmeshwari would be returned to her mother or given in neutral custody before the expiry of ten-day period. Nothing of this sort had been agreed to between the two sides and it was only a face saving tactic by KHAC to call off the agitation. The fizzling out of the agitation was blamed by a section of the Kashmiri Pandits on

dissensions and differences in the rank and file of the Pandits themselves which left them high and dry without achieving anything worthwhile to their credit, although in the initial phase of this agitation they exhibited a unique solidarity over this crucial issue. This agitation actually flopped due to the subversive role played by a Pandit minister [read Durga Prasad Dhar] in the state government for his own selfish end.⁷⁷

Later, the state government appointed a Commission under Justice Raghubar Dayal to "inquire into the causes and courses of major communal disturbances since 1 August 1967 at Jammu, Srinagar and Bugam (Kulgam)."⁷⁸ Concurrently, it also appointed D. P. Kohli Commission of Inquiry to look into "the allegations of use of excessive force by the Police in dealing with the situations etc. during August 1967." However, the findings of the two commissions were not made public. To an RTI application seeking copies of the reports of the two commissions, the Home Department of the Jammu and Kashmir Government replied that the information "is not forthcoming from the records."⁷⁹

The court case about the alleged abduction and forcible marriage of Parmeshwari remained inconclusive. The case involved some intricate issues with possible repercussions in other parts of India where the Pandit agitation had already clouded the atmosphere. The authorities in India at that time had advised caution against publicizing proceedings of the court where the judge heard but did not record the arguments. The case continued for several months but before it had reached the stage of recording witnesses and their cross examination, the Pandit agitation was withdrawn and the prosecution did not pursue the case further. In addition, the defence did not feel necessary to follow the case. Finally, it was consigned to the records. Advocate Tassaduq Hussain, who appeared for Parmeshwari and her husband, recalls the events thus:

The case was not decided by the court. The issue was complex and involved interpretation under two different sets of laws—the Islamic jurisprudence and the English law. The question was whether Parmeshwari could have converted at her alleged age of 17 years and few months and whether the English law or the Islamic jurisprudence would decide the issue. There being no prescribed age for conversion under any law, my argument was that Parmeshwari's conversion to Islam was legal. About the prescribed age for marriage there were two points of view. According to the Islamic jurisprudence a girl attained maturity at the age of 13 years while the English law prescribed the age of 18 years. My argument was that since the girl had lawfully converted to Islam her marriage was governed by the Islamic jurisprudence according to which she was a major at the time

of her marriage with Kanth and had the right to live with him. The complexity of the case that I brought to the fore unnerved the opposite side which was represented by a battery of lawyers including the senior most advocates like Jia Lal Chowdhary, Madsudhan Kak, Srikant Tikoo and S. L. Koul. I was assisted by Advocate Ibrahim Shahdad and at one stage Latif Qureshi also joined the defence side. An RSS affiliated lawyer from Delhi, Ram Singh, had also joined the prosecution side.

The case had attained political importance. The Pandit agitation had peaked and it had influenced atmosphere in other states of India. The Indian press was seriously involved in the case. Given the conflict between the two streams of jurisprudence and the repercussions it would have elsewhere in India there was some direction from New Delhi not to highlight the case. The Judge, Mirza Saifuddin, heard but did not record arguments. Media also carried a filtered version of the court proceedings. In the meanwhile, Indian Home Minister, Y. B. Chavan, arrived in Srinagar and had a meeting with Kashmiri Pandits following which the agitation was withdrawn. The case did not reach the stage of recording witnesses and their cross examination. The prosecution did not pursue the case any further and it was allowed to fizzle out. The court consigned the case to records.⁸⁰

The Pandit agitation and the resultant violence had its echo in the State Assembly where the issue was debated and the Chief Minister made statements, at least, on three occasions—13, 17 and 31 August. During a debate on 31 August, Shamim Ahmad Shamim informed the house that he had an occasion to meet Parmeshwari and found her firm on her stand. He said that she could not be deprived of her fundamental rights. “If the Pandits have grievances about services and trainings so have the Muslims,” Shamim told the House, and asked the Chief Minister not to compromise under compulsion as that would give rise to new complications. Prem Nath Dogra justified Madhok’s speech at Sheetal Nath and said that the latter had said nothing that the Chief Minister himself had not said. He alleged police excesses on Pandit demonstrators. Peer Yahya Siddiqi and Ali Muhammad Naik wondered why an agitation was started on an interfaith marriage when many such cases had happened in the past. Naik alleged that

through the agitation, the Muslims of Kashmir were being defamed as communalists. He dismissed the grievances of the Pandits in matters of service and trainings as ‘unjustified’. Mir Qasim appealed the Pandits to suspend the agitation “if they had no motive to start communal disturbances.” He said that economic issues had been mixed with the girl’s issue and asked the Chief Minister to let the law take its own course.

Chief Minister Sadiq refused to interfere into the alleged abduction of the girl for the matter being sub judice. Initially, he was in favour of returning the girl to her mother. However, when he was convinced that she had converted and married of her own accord and that she was not a minor as alleged by the Pandit community, he rejected his government’s intervention in the matter. Soon after Parmeshwari’s conversion and marriage, the Mufti Azam was called by Sadiq for exploring the possibility of the girl being returned to her mother, but the latter told him that it was against the tenets of Islam as she had willingly accepted the new faith. Mir Qasim was also present in the meeting. Later, an unknown person came to the Mufti Azam to clarify that the Chief Minister did not mean to send the girl back forcibly.⁸¹

The stand taken by Sadiq to what he believed uphold the rule of law made him and his government villains in the eyes of Kashmiri Pandits. During processions and public meetings, he was mentioned in abusive words and slogans were raised against him. A politician whose “secular credentials were beyond question”⁸² was dubbed as a staunch communalist and saddened by this label.⁸³ Here was a man, being accused of practicing communalism who could perhaps be held responsible for anything that went wrong in Kashmir, but not on the issue of secularism, and who, as Chief Minister, opened the constitutional door for the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh’s (RSS) closest-to-the-heart project of ‘complete integration of Kashmir with India’ through the erosion of the Article 370. Mir Qasim quoted an upset Chief Minister as saying: “I do not need the power for which I will have to move around displaying on my arm the badge of loyalty for India.”⁸⁴ Sadiq’s disappointment overflowed from his observation:

A Muslim in this country whether in or out of power is a victim.
If under the Defence of India Rules and other black laws Muslims
of this state [Jammu and Kashmir] are arrested in thousands and

put behind the bars [and] dozens are killed in firing nobody in this big country would raise voice against this tyranny. But if a Muslim *haakim* so much as only annoys a non-Muslim citizen the entire Hindu population of the Indian Republic turns against him.⁸⁵

Besides the Chief Minister and the so-called Control Room of his colleagues, KAP became the target of ire of the Kashmiri Pandits. Every day, processions taken out in the city shouted slogans, such as *KAP hai hai* (Shame to KAP), *Pakistani KAP ko wapas kardo* (Send back the Pakistani KAP) and *KAP Murdabad* (Down with KAP), against this law enforcing agency of the State. At many places, men of the force were attacked and abused. The KAP action against the Pandits was compared with the “extermination of Jews by Hitler” and “reminiscent of Jallianwala Bagh.”⁸⁶ It was also accused of using tear-gas shells meant for “war purposes only” and “not for use on civilian population.”⁸⁷ Allegations of the KAP’s high-handedness were also made in telegrams sent to the Government of India and various other places. One such telegram reads:

The younger generation of Kashmiri Hindus smarting under invidious discrimination and innumerable other injustices were obliged to take out a procession pleading for return of minor girl forcibly abducted and converted on a day viz 15th August 1967 which to them is a day of bliss and hope (.) The neo-Nazis of Sadiq Government let loose legions of armed troops in their hundreds on innocent unarmed women and children (.) People still wonder whether more troops were mobilised for conquering Haji Peer[,] Teetwal Gali and Burki in Indo Pak war of 1965 (.) All sections of public extremely shocked on unleashing of smoke tear and poison gas on women and children (.) Firing of shells direct into the crowd of women and use of batons on fallen and lying down children unpardonable (.) Fascist terror and repression no reply to peaceful slogans for justice and India (.) Situation resembles Hitler’s extermination of Jews (.) Press gagged news blacked out (.) Hindus vow for fight to finish more repression would cause eruption of volcano the lava whereof would sweep everything coming its way(.)⁸⁸

In the city, the government had requisitioned and deployed several non-local battalions of armed police and paramilitary forces, such as

Border Security Force (BSF), CRP, Madhya Pradesh Special Armed Force (MP SAF), Haryana Armed Police (HAP) and Uttar Pradesh Provincial Armed Constabulary (UP PAC). The majority community saw in these police units a force sympathetic to the Pandit agitators. On 27 August, two unprecedented incidents occurred in Srinagar involving CRP, UP PAC and KAP. The first incident occurred at Krala Khud where CRP and KAP personnel had a scuffle among themselves, and the officer-in-charge of KAP was allegedly beaten up by his CRP counterpart. The second incident happened at Haba Kadal during which UP PAC personnel assaulted KAP personnel with their batons. Jalaluddin Shah, who was passing through the area when the clash was on, saw KAP men being thrashed and the DIG of Police, D. N. Koul, present on the spot, looking the other way. Several KAP men were injured and admitted to a hospital for treatment. One policeman's turban was torn into pieces. Earlier, a crowd of a few thousand had gathered at Haba Kadal at about 7:30 a.m. after relaxation in the curfew. The Police Control Room had directed two companies of the fourth KAP on duty at Lal Chowk to proceed to Krala Khud, one company via Ganpatyar and another via Zaindar Mohalla, to handle the emerging situation.

The incidents were the first of their kind and serious in nature as these involved discipline and conduct of different police units in public. A joint enquiry was conducted by D. N. Koul, DIG of Police, Kashmir Range, and Birbal Nath, DIG, BSF, Srinagar. The enquiry report, as admitted by Koul and Nath, placed "more reliance on the version given by such persons [referred to in the report as independent witnesses who did not want their identity to be disclosed] than by police officers whose version not only suffered from exaggeration but also in some cases by irreconcilable contradictions." About the Krala Khud incident, the report said that KAP, under the command of Inspector G. Q. Jalloo, mounted a baton charge on a crowd of about 1,000 people who pressed to accompany the five *satyagrahis* who were taken into custody and removed from the spot in a jeep. The police action resulted in injury to some women in the front rows, drawing a hail of stones from the crowd. In reply, KAP threw tear smoke shells and stones. One tear smoke shell fell on a CRP vehicle and CRP men also came within the range of stones hurled by KAP personnel, leading to an unseemly public argument between Inspector

Jalloo and Inspector Y. C. Sharma of CRP. The agitators applauded CRP. The report rejected the allegation of Jaloo that he was beaten up by Sharma, confirming, however, that a scuffle and exchange of stones did take place between KAP and CRP.

About the Haba Kadal incident, the enquiry report suggested that Platoon No. 2 of F Coy of UP PAC II under Sub-inspector Raj Bahadur had been relieved by 42 BSF, and it was in a truck on the bridge when a tear smoke shell fired by KAP at Krala Khud fell on it. UP PAC personnel got down from the truck, blamed the nearby present KAP men in the command of Deputy Superintendent of Police, M. A. Rather, to have them tear gassed and assaulted them with their batons. The report claimed the evidence of KAP men as "contradictory and exaggerated regarding details" but held that "the assault was made by UP PAC men." In conclusion, the report held Inspector G. Q. Jaloo

responsible for precipitating a situation in Kralah Khud, and Inspector YC Sharma of 2 CRP of conduct unbecoming of police officer of his rank in staging a Public quarrel with KAP whatever the provocation was, SI Raj Bahadur and men of UP PAC II of most unbecoming conduct in beating their colleagues of 4th KAP, whatever their grouse was.

Witnesses felt that KAP personnel were wrongly held responsible for the clashes. Abdul Majid Khan, a retired senior superintendent of police, who was present on the spot, termed the enquiry report as a farce. However, the strongest censure of the report came from Emmanuel Sumitra Modak, inspector general of police, Jammu and Kashmir, and an officer of the Imperial Police, the predecessor of the Indian Police Service, who rubbed it by calling it "superficial and inadequate." He trashed the report on several counts and offered to make a personal enquiry into the matter. In a letter addressed to the Secretary to government, Home Department, he wrote:

The general purport [of the enquiry report] is that it was the inept handling of the mob by the KAP men, when the women and children were involved, which gave rise to the situation. In this connection, I might mention that I had immediately

proceeded to the spot and made brief enquiries there as well as with the KAP men, who are lying injured in the police hospital. My own impressions of the incident are somewhat different from that formed by the DIGs.

In this connection there are several questions that arise: (a) Why is the evidence of the KAP men disbelieved and in what way is it said to be contradictory? (b) What evidence was there of the tear gas shells actually falling into two trucks? Where any of the policemen inside injured, or at least did any of them get some marks on their clothes etc? Why were the drivers of the trucks not examined by the DIGs? (c) If an unlawful assembly was formed at the place, and the persons concerned refused to disperse even when they were asked to do so, what alternative the police had to using force to disperse the mob? (d) Why was not the magistrate questioned? I met Mr Tyubji there, and he knew something about the incident. I saw that Inspector Jaloo had received a bad injury on his chin. Why has his evidence been disbelieved?

In my opinion the enquiry is superficial and inadequate. When the situation returns completely to normal, I propose to make a personal enquiry into the matter.⁸⁹

Modak, the youngest recipient of the Imperial Police Medal and author of several books, including *Beloved of the Gods* that was published a day after his death on 19 April 2010, was advised by the Government not to reopen the issue, although, on his observations, no action was taken against Inspector Jaloo. He was replaced on 11 November 1967 as the chief of Jammu and Kashmir Police by Surinder Nath, who allegedly exerted pressure to see Modak out and secure the position for himself. Earlier, on 1 September, D. N. Koul, known among his friends as the intellectual cop, was relieved of law and order responsibilities and given the charge of the Police Control Room and normal policing in Srinagar. The city was divided into two proportionate zones, each one given under the control of BSF and KAP in the charge of Birbal Nath and Muhammad Sultan, DIG, respectively.⁹⁰

The agitators found in non-local police units sympathetic men as against KAP. In the Hindu dominated localities, Pandit women were seen serving tea and refreshment to them even during curfew hours.

On Raksha Bhandhan, a Hindu festival, which fell on 20 August that year, Pandit women tied *rakhis* on the wrists of these police personnel. This was done in the presence of Muslim neighbours, as if to send a signal. At several places, Muslims complained that the non-local policemen thrashed them and, in many cases, after asking their identity, their curfew passes were torn and they were beaten up. "During the days and nights of curfew in the city some Pandit volunteers securing cooperation of overzealous C. R. P. men harassed peaceful Muslims who were beaten or humiliated."⁹¹ On 25 August, the *chowkidar* of the Brick and Tile factory (Pampore), Faqir Singh, beat up sweeper Sona Sheikh who had refused his direction to stand guard at the gate for some time. President of the Workers' Union, Ghulam Ahmad Bhat, slapped and admonished both. Faqir Singh raised a hue and cry, inviting the attention of the CRP personnel on duty at the nearby Radio Station who rushed to the spot and beat up both Sheikh and Bhat and took them into custody. Later, they were set free on the intervention of Damodhar Singh, Manager of the factory. Bhat alleged that his wristwatch and ₹72 were snatched from him in the custody. On the following day, one Pyare Lal Mattoo lost his ring while washing his hands at a public tap in Pampore. He informed the CRP personnel who allegedly caught hold of Ramzan Bhat and Ahmad Bhat, residents of Pampore, Noor Hajam, resident of Pantha Chhokh and Ghulam Mohammad, *chowkidar*, and beat them up. The hapless victims received injuries. On 27 August, Muslim residents of Kani Kadal and Haba Kadal alleged that CRP personnel, with Kashmiri Pandits, had threatened them and looted their houses. Later, they arrived at the residence of the Chief Minister to lodge a complaint against CRP.⁹²

The stated reason behind launching a violent agitation was the government's failure to recover and return to her mother an 'abducted minor Pandit girl'. Was Parmeshwari a minor when she converted and married Ghulam Rasool? Mufti Bashiruddin recalls Parmeshwari as a healthy girl who by her physical look did not at all appear to be a minor.⁹³ Advocate Tassaduq Hussain, who defended her in a case of abduction and forcible marriage filed by her mother, remembered Parmeshwari as, "a very sharp girl with mature understanding."⁹⁴ He spoke with her for about an hour and found her "well versant with Islam and very

categorical about her conversion and marriage with Ghulam Rasool Kanth out of her free will.”⁹⁵ The Pandits based their argument on school admission register of Arya Girls High School, where she had studied, and indicated her date of birth as 28 July 1950, which was reportedly also the date entered in the records of the Jammu and Kashmir Board of Secondary Education. According to this, her age would be 17 years on the day she married. However, those who held that the girl was an adult alleged that the school in question, being a community run institution, faked the certificate, and referred to the Municipality records that had an entry regarding the birth of a daughter to Narayan Joo (girl’s father) on *Jeth 30 Samvat* 2004 (about 11 June 1947).⁹⁶ Pertinently, Narayan Joo Handoo and Dhanvati had in Parmeshwari the only child. At the time of her marriage, Parmeshwari was doing a Government job for securing of one then, as now, was one of the prerequisite qualifications to be an adult. On 5 August, while in custody, police sent her to SMHS Hospital, Srinagar, for medical examination. A lady doctor after examining her stated that she “appears to be about 20 years of age” and advised X-ray for the confirmation of her opinion which was conducted and on its basis the Radiologist too confirmed her to be an adult.⁹⁷

The Pandits demanded that the girl should be restored to her mother or given into some neutral custody till a judicial finding about her age was forthcoming, but depending on “other documentary and medical evidence produced by the girl to prove her contention of being major, the police refused to revise their decision and the government saw no reason to intervene.”⁹⁸ KHAC raised a storm over, what it alleged, the police exercising the authority of determining the age of the girl that was the jurisdiction of a court of law. “But impartial lawyers held that the police was entitled to make a decision and abide by it.”⁹⁹ In the girl’s refusal to return to her mother and the police allowing her to go with her husband, the Pandits jumped on the opportunity to launch an agitation. According to Mohammad Sayeed Malik, no constitutional authority ordered that she should be restored back to her mother.¹⁰⁰

No sooner was the agitation launched than the motive behind it was revealed. On the very first day (7 August) when protest meetings began to be held at Sheetal Nath, Shiv Narain Fotedar threatened

deterioration in the situation with its repercussions in India.¹⁰¹ Was it a warning to the government held out in the heat of the moment or was he reading from a script? Within 72 hours of his speech, a meeting was held at Sheetal Nath during which speakers highlighted “hardships and injustice meted out to the minority during two decades since 1947.” A KHAC publication recorded the proceedings of the meeting in the following words:

It was felt that the minority community had perhaps no place in its own homeland where the Government was openly hostile and worked only on communal considerations. The insecure conditions in which the minority community found itself were discussed by the speaker after speaker. Discrimination by the men in power against the members of the community in all walks of life was narrated with open grief.

It was felt and expressed that we had patiently suffered all this injustice and discriminatory acts only in the hope that accession of the State to the Indian Union was otherwise at stake. The indignities suffered by this small community with resultant economic distress were patiently undergone during the last two decades. It was felt that an inroad into the culture, the traditions, the religious practices and above all the honour of women folk was too high a price in the wake of the accession to the India Union. It placed too great a strain on our patriotism. The manner in which the seduction of this minor girl was handled by the Govt. provoked the common decision to launch satyagraha either to mend the mater or to end our humiliating conditions in this area. This became the main theme of the speeches made from this day onwards.¹⁰²

So the cat was out of the bag sooner than one would have expected. The fight for the return of an ‘abducted minor girl’ turned overnight into a fight for economic, cultural and religious rights and the “accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India,” the point of political blackmail. During the agitation, although, KHAC publicly held that the return of the ‘abducted girl’ was the only objective of the agitation. However, in its meeting with Home Minister Y. B. Chavan, it could not hold itself back from expressing its “concern about the various disabilities and difficulties which their community had been

facing in matters of economic development, employment and educational opportunities.”¹⁰³ KHAC composed of, what Prem Nath Bazaz believed, “some unknown but designing men,” was “determined to kick up a row by inflaming the low passions of the Pandits.”¹⁰⁴ Bazaz identified three forces—Jan Sangh, former Prime Minister’s Pandit mercenaries and rejected candidates for government jobs and aspirants for admission in technical institutions—for “pushing the unsuspecting Pandit community into a dangerous position.”¹⁰⁵ In his words:

First, the Jan Sangh whose supporters now and again advance the rabidly non-Muslim proposals of settling Hindu refugees from Pakistan in the State after pushing pro-Pakistan Muslims across the border or of amalgamating the State with Punjab or Himachal Pradesh, to solve the accession problem. Occasionally, if not always, these plans have appealed to the thoughtless, frustrated Pandits; under excitement they appeared practical and achievable.¹⁰⁶

The second, though unobserved, force was believed to be the ‘Pandit mercenaries’ of Balkshi Ghulam Muhammad who could “descend to any depths in order to see the Sadiq Government toppled” and “pinned his hope on the Pandit agitation.”¹⁰⁷ Some senior leaders within the ruling Congress Party from the Pandit community were allegedly pulling the strings of the agitators. Fotedar, despite holding a very high constitutional position, joined the agitation and, in fact, presided over the public meeting during which KHAC was formed. Fotedar’s active role in the agitation was posthumously acknowledged by a ‘grateful’ community. Kashmiri Pandit Network, a website of the community, took pride in admitting that Fotedar “extended his full support to this agitation.”¹⁰⁸ Durga Prasad Dhar, Sadiq’s finance minister and close ally, was the hidden hand behind the agitation.¹⁰⁹ The agitators raising slogans against him and his alleged excommunication by Kashmiri Pandits in Jammu for his alleged stance against the agitation was believed to be only a camouflage for his anti-Sadiq activities. In the words of Mir Qasim: “The fact of the matter is that those days there were some non-Muslim colleagues in our Congress Party here. There is no doubt that they were behind this agitation and some of Sadiq Sahab’s close friends were involved in the conspiracy.”¹¹⁰

Ironically, people close to Sadiq felt that Qasim himself was one among them for he nursed the dream of becoming the chief minister that he realized only after the demise of the former in 1971.

The two forces, identified by Bazaz, were joined by the third in “the sizable section of the disgruntled officials, rejected candidates for government jobs or admission in technical institutions and the educated unemployed,”¹¹¹ and thus KHAC “launched the most ill-conceived, misdirected and uncontrolled agitation in the modern annals of Kashmiri Pandits.”¹¹² However, it was clear that KHAC generated hysteria, and every section of the community—rich, poor, educated, illiterate, senior official, peon, shopkeeper, technician, progressive minded and communist—spoke in the same language about the alleged Pandit victimhood and Muslim high-handedness and jumped into the agitation. Even the secretaries to government and gazetted officers participated in the demonstrations and defied both the orders banning processions and the government service regulations.

During the agitation, much happened to turn the situation communal and whoever was interested in such a situation appeared achieving the objective. Provocative slogans raised during demonstrations, especially during public meetings at Sheetal Nath, some of which Bazaz would not like even to mention except record in his private diary,¹¹³ added fuel to the fire of resentment among the Muslim community, chiefly its youth. In the words of Bazaz:

Day in and day out objectionable remarks were uttered in speeches calculated to wound the susceptibilities of the Muslims a few of whom heard these with their own ears and then circulated them in their coreligionists. Worse still, the Pandit hearers returning from the meeting ground gloated over these remarks and applauded them in their homes, on the shops and in the offices. It seemed Pandits imagined they had gained uncommon strength and they could say and do anything with impunity. That vituperative slogans were raised castigating Sadiq and his colleagues was not so bad but incautious and offensive words were employed challenging Muslims in general. I have these remarks carefully recorded in my diary but would not like to mention them for obvious reasons; besides some of them are unmentionable.¹¹⁴

Incidents of attacks on some Pandits and stone pelting over their houses had happened at different places in the city. KHAC variously described the alleged attackers as 'Muslim goondas', 'government paid agents' and 'agents of the control room'. Reports of such incidents were also lodged with the police. M. K. Koul, Engineering Supervisor (Carrier), Posts and Telegraphs Department, filed a written complaint to his director about stone pelting on his house and named Block President of the Congress party as life-threatening for being an agent of the Government of India and possessing a telephone. He demanded that security should be provided to him and his family as "the possession of telephone endangers my life and that of those living in my house."¹¹⁵ K. S. Khosla, staff correspondent of the *Times of India*, informed the Chief Minister that stones were pelted on some houses of Hindus in Wazir Bagh.

Notwithstanding the withdrawal of the agitation on 3 September, KHAC members and their volunteers continued with playing mischief. They issued provocative statements and resorted to the "dangerous game of pin-pricking at a time when even an unguarded remark would have caused a scuffle."¹¹⁶ KHAC adopted "a bellicose, aggressive and uncompromising attitude"¹¹⁷ and held almost daily meetings at Sheetal Nath "where such speeches were delivered as could hardly be conducive to the interests of peace or to the restoration of normalcy."¹¹⁸ The Pandit leaders continued with threats to revive the agitation if the government did not carry out the terms of the agreement they had with it. "The leaders of the Muslim opinion, on the other hand continued to adopt a conciliatory attitude to maintain peace and communal harmony."¹¹⁹ At public meetings, and through posters, leaders of the Plebiscite Front emphasized on the need to uphold communal harmony. At the same time, however, they "smelt a conspiracy in the agitation launched under the cover of the Parmeshwari affair to pressurise and overawe the majority community."¹²⁰ The polarization that started between the two communities during the agitation went deeper, especially among the student community. Students had formed the backbone of the Pandit agitation that had its inevitable reaction on the minds of the Muslim students who "could not fail to take note of the clearly communal overtone of the agitation."¹²¹

Several incidents of grave portents happened in quick succession that resulted in major disturbance and death of several Muslims, including students, in police firing on 3 and 7 October. The incidents eroded mutual faith, confidence and cordiality between the two communities. Complaints of harassment and high-handedness by members of one community were made against the other, particularly from mixed localities in the city. Around this time, KHAC leaders had gone to New Delhi and, in liaison with Jan Sangh, "carried on false propaganda regarding conditions in Kashmir conjuring up imaginary incidents and exaggerating or twisting beyond proportions minor events of little consequence."¹²² KHAC statements carried by the Press presented a picture "as if the majority community had made the lives and honour of the minority miserable and unsafe."¹²³ Muslims felt that they were ill served for their forbearance displayed by them as a whole during the agitation despite serious provocations from the other side.

On 11 September, a confrontation took place between the Muslim and Hindu students of the Gandhi Memorial College, Srinagar, when the former asked some members of the college staff, who were on strike for some days, to take their classes as their time was wasted for no fault of theirs. This was followed by an argument between a Hindu and a Muslim student. The former dubbed the latter as a Pakistani and allegedly whipped out a knife. Some other Hindu students, reportedly, also took out knives. The development created a serious situation later defused by the police. Another confrontation between the students of the two communities in the Sri Pratap College took place on 20 September over a resolution passed a day earlier by the Pandit students of the Women's College, Kothibagh (now Maulana Azad Road), stating therein that they did not feel any insecurity. This went against the KHAC allegation that Pandit girls were feeling insecure to attend educational institutions, and its leaders alleged that the Principal of the College had forced the girls to sign the resolution. The confrontation brought the polarization between the students of the two communities out in the open.

During the intervening night of 20–21 September, a Muslim shrine at Baramulla town in North Kashmir was gutted in a mysterious fire. Five days later, a mosque situated at some distance from the gutted shrine was destroyed in yet another mysterious incident of fire, causing

serious anguish and concern among the majority community. The community saw in the twin incidents an organized attempt to injure its religious sentiments. The incident was followed by processions in Srinagar, involving students of different educational institutions. On 22 September, Muslim students of the Amar Singh College, Srinagar, protested and raised slogans against the Hindu principal who allegedly did not allow them to offer Friday prayers in the college premises. The next day, a sepoy of MP SAF beat a driver, Muhammad Saleh of Maisuma, at the Parimpura Bridge and inflicted injury on his arm with his bayonet. The incident created anger among the Muslims of the area. Wild rumours started circulating, and shopkeepers downed their shutters and enraged people from adjacent areas marched towards the bridge. The situation was saved by the police from taking an ugly turn.

On 29 September, a sacrilegious incident of serious portent took place in the city. Some pages of Holy Qur'an in which tobacco was wrapped were found in the urinal of the Islamia College. It incensed the Muslim students. On the same day, a Hindu teacher of the Government Girls School, Rambagh, allegedly pulled down some mottos bearing Islamic inscriptions from the walls of a classroom. Muslim girl students protested against the incident and were later joined by students from the nearby Boys High School, Barzulla. On 30 September, some Hindu students smeared with vermillion the *chinar* within the premises of the Government Polytechnic, Srinagar, under whose shade Muslim students had started offering prayers for some days. The mischief appeared as a calculated provocation for the Muslim students whose feelings were already hurt by the series of sacrilegious incidents.

As if these unfortunate incidents were not enough, another grave sacrilegious incident happened on 3 October. That day some students of the Government Girls High School, Kothibagh, to their shock, found Yassarnal Qur'an, Arabic primer containing extracts from Holy Qur'an, in the school latrine. The news spread like wildfire. Muslim students from the nearby Sri Pratap College took out a procession shouting the slogan *Tawheen-i-Qur'an hai hai* (Sacrilege of the Qur'an, shame, shame). Muslim students from other educational institutions, and many other people, also joined them and the procession swelled to several thousand at Lal Chowk. Raising slogans, it started moving

towards the interiors of the city. Police used batons and teargas to disperse the stone-pelting crowd, and the procession split into different parts fanning out to Badshah Chowk and Maisuma. Vehicles passing on the road were pelted with stones by the agitated men in the procession. At about 4:30 p.m., a vehicle carrying HAP personnel under the operational control of the Army passed through the Badshah Chowk and came under a barrage of stones pelted by the demonstrators. Upon this, at least, two policemen got down the vehicle and started indiscriminate firing on the crowd. After firing several rounds and hitting many people, the vehicle sped away from the scene.

About the same time, a platoon of the BSF 45 fired few rounds at Maisuma Bazar hitting some more people. As a result of the firing at two spots, at least four persons were killed, three of whom were students. The dead included Bashir Ahmad Mir son of Muhammad Yusuf Mir of Qazi Masjid, Karfali Mohalla, Muhammad Anwar Leharwal son of Ghulam Ahmad of Tankipora, Abdul Ahad Khan son of Jabar Khan of Dompura, Basant Bagh, and Nisar Ahmad Jan son of Professor Shamsuddin of Balgarden. In addition, many people sustained bullet injuries. Srinagar was gripped with tension as the Muslims felt agitated over the incident, especially when even more violent Pandit processions over the past months were never fired upon. Curfew was clamped in some parts of the city, especially in the mixed localities. Interestingly, KHAC felt obliged to absolve the non-local policemen of killing four persons by arguing that the police "in defence had to resort to firing,"¹²⁴ saying not four but only two died in the firing.

On 4 October, amid complete shutdown in Srinagar, the dead in the previous day's firing were laid to rest and a public meeting was held at the Jama Masjid. On the culmination of the public meeting, agitated Muslims fought pitched battles with police at many places, including Khanqah-i-Mualla, Zaina Kadal and Bohri Kadal. Incidents of looting and damage to shops belonging to Hindus at Zaina Kadal and Muslims at Bhan Mohallah were reported. A couple of incidents of mob violence were also reported, resulting in the death of one Avtar Krishen Khashoo who was attacked at Dukan-i-Sangeen and had received stab wounds. No less than 16 cases of loot and mob violence were registered on 4 October in Police Station Maharajgunj. In view

of the situation getting serious, curfew was extended to the whole city. Three days later, when the situation had started limping back to normal, another tragic incident was waiting to happen. In an unprovoked firing incident on 7 October, involving the CRP, at least two passers-by were killed outside the Srinagar (Bakhshi) Stadium.¹²⁵ The dead included an assistant engineer, Ghulam Muhammad Khachoo of Doabgah, and an unidentified villager. The incident triggered protests and upset the Chief Minister so much that he demanded withdrawal of CRP from Kashmir and replace it with the local police.¹²⁶ However, that did not happen except that CRP was relocated from the city to other areas.

The developments taking place in Srinagar, especially in the aftermath of Madhok speech and killing of six people in two police firing incidents, caused tense situations elsewhere in the Valley. Rumours emanating from Srinagar further added to tension. In Bugam and Kharbrari villages of Anantnag district, violent incidents took place on 7 October when about 300 students of High School Bugam took out a procession and pelted stones on some Pandit houses and damaged the outer walls of a local temple. Later, they marched towards Kharbrari, threw stones on some more houses belonging to the minority community and desecrated two temples. The attackers were “inveigled to believe into the existence of some dumps of arms and ammunition in the houses and temples of the Hindus, supplied by the Jan Sangh.”¹²⁷ There were no arms dumps and the attacks “came out to be a reaction to the speech of Balraj Madhok and the rumour of holy Qura’n being desecrated at Srinagar.”¹²⁸ The incidents did not result in any communal clash as it involved only a section of students, while the Muslim community was not involved. Kashmiri Pandit residents of the two villages admitted that Muslims came to their rescue and chased the students away.¹²⁹

Indira Gandhi’s rebuke to KHAC was an admission at the highest level in India that the latter had communalized a trifling issue. Despite the unreasonable attitude exhibited by the KHAC leadership and provocations it resorted to, Muslims in general and their leaders in particular responded with restraint and maturity. That the community did not let the situation deteriorate to the point of disaster was praised by everybody. Bhagwan Sahai, Governor of Jammu and Kashmir,

complimented the Muslim majority for its laudable role during the Pandit agitation and dispelled the impression sought to be created by a section of the people that the minority community felt unsafe in Kashmir. Sahai told a news conference in Srinagar:

The minorities are fully safe across the length and breadth of the State and live a satisfied life. There is no danger to their security and the credit for it goes to the majority community. This is such an example that should be emulated by people living in other parts of the country. Whatever impression the newspapers and speeches might give, many a representative of the minority community have admitted before me that during the recent tension the majority community displayed extraordinary tolerance, amity and large-heartedness.¹³⁰

The Governor observed that he had witnessed many such incidents in his life but the way people of Kashmir exhibited patience and forbearance has enhanced his faith in secularism.¹³¹ Jan Sangh had demanded imposition of the President's rule in Jammu and Kashmir which Sahai rejected by saying that neither the law and order machinery in the State had failed nor was the security of any section of the population threatened. He said that whatever the organizers of the agitation might say, its *raison d' être* was communal.¹³² Home Minister Chavan at a press conference in Srinagar also praised "people, especially Muslims"¹³³ for maintaining communal harmony. On his return at Palam Airport, he was more elaborate and said, "the Kashmiri Muslim leaders including those of the Plebiscite Front had acquitted themselves 'very correctly' during the trouble."¹³⁴ Thereafter, Chavan was reported to have told the Union Cabinet that Pandit agitation had created communal tension in the Valley.¹³⁵

The Pandit agitation and the resultant violence claimed at least 10 lives. The victims included six Muslims. KHAC publication put the number of dead Pandits at seven, including one unidentified, but gave account of only five deaths by name.¹³⁶ The official situation reports between 7 August and 31 August reported only four deaths among the Pandits. KHAC was alleged to have also counted among fatal casualties persons who had passed away due to natural causes.¹³⁷

In an atmosphere of violence and tension, some interesting incidents happening through the course of agitation provided amusement to people. For the return of Parmeshwari, as the Pandits raised the slogan *Behen ji ko wapas karo* (Return our sister), the Muslims responded with a counter slogan *Mahraz ko phirsaal karo* (Invite the bridegroom to post-nuptial feast). On the allegation of the Pandit agitators that KAP was committing excesses on them, Muslims raised a taunting slogan *Akh niyakh behanji beyi dogwaan, traahi Bagwaan traahi Bagwaan* (First, they abducted our sister and, now, we are beaten up. God, Protect us!). When the agitation was at its peak, one day, word spread that Raghunath, son of Ram Joo of Ganpatyar, had threatened his father that if the latter did not give him his share in property he would embrace Islam. The police, already having a conversion crisis at hand, called Ram Joo to the Police Station Shergarhi, where he was advised to sort out the matter with his son. During the agitation, Jan Sangh became an object of hatred and ire of Muslims. Anything untoward happening in Kashmir those days was attributed to this organization. Thus, the theft of bibcocks from some mosques situated at Haka Bazar, Pandan, and Pir Haji Mohammad Sahib, Saraf Kadal, was placed in the lap of Jan Sangh whose workers, it was alleged, roamed the city streets during nights.

Brij Krishan Dass, 28, was one among the crowd that assembled at the Hari Singh High Street on 12 August to bid farewell to five *satyagrahis* who had planned court arrest. He too was arrested along with the *satyagrahis*.¹³⁸ Rajinder Koul, a young *satyagrahi*, unlike other arrested volunteers was in high spirits while being taken to Police Station Shergarhi. "We are four brothers and I can easily sacrifice myself for the community," he proudly told his arrested co-passengers. Minutes after his arrival at the police station, a stinking doorless urinal cum latrine in a corner of the lock-up room with no outlet greeted him. Koul's high spirits were quickly overtaken by depression. Dass somehow facilitated his slip out of the lock-up room during serving of food that had arrived for the arrested *satyagrahis* from a *langar*. Once out of the police station, he hired a Tonga and sped away to home as well as from any occasion in future to sacrifice himself for a community cause. Like Koul, the harshness of jail life took the better

part of valour of many *satyagrahis* and other arrested men who signed papers of apology to seek their early release.¹³⁹

Why did Kashmiri Pandits erupt violently over one of their girls marrying outside the faith when this was neither the first nor the last such incident?

Kashmiri Muslims believed that Parmeshwari served only as an excuse, while the agitation was actually the street expression of the 'Pandit Clout' in Kashmir at whose back stood the Hindu majority of India. Slogans, such as *Bharat mata ki jai* (Victory be to Mother India) and *Hindustan zindabad* (Long live India), were raised to highlight this connect. The agitation was seen by Muslims as a message for them that despite being a minuscule minority, the Pandits could have their way if a situation of confrontation between the two communities broke out. Active participation of Bhartiya Jan Sangh in the agitation and shouting of provocative slogans were read as flexing of muscles by Pandits to demonstrate that Kashmir might have passed out of the hands of Hindu rulers, but they were not out.

The termination of the autocratic Dogra rule meant that Kashmiri Pandits had to surrender, what Bazaz called, "the medieval privileges"¹⁴⁰ enjoyed by them since 1819 AD, when Kashmir passed from Muslim to non-Muslim rule. On the one hand, they were happy that the Valley had fallen into the lap of India and not gone to Pakistan where they would be insecure. On the other, however, they found it hard to compromise with a situation where they had to share opportunities in public services with the majority community. They refused to adjust themselves mentally with the changing scenario and continued dreaming about restoring the Hindu hegemony in an overwhelmingly Muslim land. In the post-1947 'process of democratization', they saw *Muslimization* of Kashmir. Since Muslims were an overwhelming majority, it indirectly instilled a sense of insecurity among the Pandits as they began to feel concerned about the career prospects of their children. The rapid pace with which Muslims were taking to higher and technical education and competing for government jobs posed a serious challenge to the Pandit domination in services. There were some doubts lurking in the minds already and the Parmeshwari incident provided an outlet. For senior journalist, Mohammad Sayeed Malik, the agitation was the "net result of accumulated grievances of

Pandits who were previously ruling the officialdom and had developed a sense of deprivation since 1947 when the Muslim majority started claiming its due space in government services.”¹⁴¹ The agitation became an easy route to express those latent fears that were not finding expression until then.¹⁴²

So, when an opportunity arose in the form of an alleged abduction of a girl from their community, the Pandits felt that by launching an agitation and coming out on streets in thousands, they would force the government to address their ‘grievances’. Three years earlier, in the wake of the mysterious theft of the holy relic from Hazratbal shrine, Muslim masses had come out on the streets of Kashmir demanding its restoration. The massive agitation shook Kashmir and, to a large extent, the Indian Government also. It only ended with the restoration of the holy relic. Leaders of the Pandit agitation thought that Muslims, by organizing and expressing themselves on the streets, got what they had demanded.

Whether or not they were conscious of it, the holy relic agitation was in the back of their mind, so much so that in demanding the return of the girl they even copied the slogan, ‘Qoumi amanat ko wapas karo’ (Return out national trust) that Muslims had raised for the restoration of the holy relic.¹⁴³

Whatever be the motivation, when the Pandit agitation broke out, it straightaway affected a communal divide.

Although Pandits kept on crying discrimination in matters of public services since 1947 the facts spoke otherwise. In 1931, under the Hindu Maharaja’s rule, out of 763 gazetted posts in Jammu and Kashmir, Pandits held 57 (i.e., 8 per cent) share, while as in 1967—the year of the agitation—this share had risen to 27 per cent. Out of the 44,529 non-gazetted posts in 1967, Pandits held more than 18 per cent share. The representation of 27 per cent and 18 per cent in gazetted and non-gazetted cadres, respectively, for a less than 2 per cent of the total population of Jammu and Kashmir could by no means be a grievance. Added to this, Pandits in large numbers got jobs in central government departments and commercial firms where employment avenues for Kashmiri Muslims were rarely open. In 1947, there were government offices and departments where Muslims were

either totally absent or rarely seen but 20 years later, the position had changed. However, compared to their numerical strength at 68 per cent of the total population of the State, their share in gazetted and non-gazetted cadres of public services was still low at 42 per cent and 47 per cent, respectively. Pandits had not visualized that Muslims would register such prominent presence in public services within two decades. The new situation in which they found themselves added to “their resentment and ill-will against the Muslims and the Kashmir Government.”¹⁴⁴ The gathering resentment against the Government gradually assumed an anti-Muslim trend, observes Bazaz.¹⁴⁵ An inter-faith marriage came handy to the Pandits for giving vent to this feeling.

The only by-product of the agitation and bloodshed was the appointment of the Gajendragadkar Commission of Inquiry under the former Chief Justice of Supreme Court of India, Justice P. B. Gajendragadkar, on 6 November 1967.¹⁴⁶ The Commission’s mandate was to inquire whether there was any discrimination in services vis-à-vis majority and minority communities and between the regions of the State. It laboriously went into the allegations and observed that there was no evidence of discrimination against any region or any ethnic group. In the process, however, it suggested decentralization of planning through separate development boards and district-wise rationalization of services quota. Out of it, grew the Wazir Commission that categorized entitlement based on caste, regions and so on. The Gajendragadkar Commission could not have brought the Pandits back to the position of pre-1947 monopoly over public services. That monopoly had to break logically and when services were proportionately distributed, their share fell drastically, naturally.

Nineteen years after the Parmeshwari incident, there was a relapse of communal tension in Kashmir. In February 1986, some incidents of violence and arson happened against the minority community, especially in Anantnag district, in which some private property and places of worship were damaged. The developments followed violence against Kashmiri Muslims in Jammu. The atmosphere in Jammu city was vitiated because of two developments. First, Muslim employees in the civil secretariat at Jammu had approached the government to provide them some space for offering congregational prayers as inclement weather made it impossible for them to do so out in the open.

The Chief Minister earmarked a store room located in the basement between the civil secretariat and the state legislature complex for the purpose and simultaneously announced a similar facility for Hindu employees within the Secretariat complex in Srinagar. However, the Hindu right wing organizations in Jammu took to streets against the decision of allowing a prayer space to Muslim employees within the Secretariat premises. Second, a lower court in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh ordered opening of doors of the sealed Babri Mosque for Hindus to worship in the disputed structure. A large number of Shiv Sena workers brandishing swords and firing gunshots "meant to terrorise Muslims and create a vicious circle of communalism,"¹⁴⁷ paraded through the streets of Jammu city celebrating, what they termed the "liberation of the Ram Janambhoomi" in Ayodhya. The court decision had infuriated Muslims and there were protests against it in different cities of India. Communal tension was heightened across states. On 15 February, police opened fire on protesters in old Delhi, killing one person. The incident generated anger in Kashmir and people staged demonstrations in Srinagar, prompting the government to impose a curfew. The Muslim Action Committee of Jammu took out a protest march on 18 February. On the same day, the local administration allowed a procession by the Hindu Raksha Samiti, creating a situation of clash between the two communities.

The Civil Secretariat and other moving offices being in Jammu, for winter Darbar Move¹⁴⁸ Kashmiri Muslim employees and their families were present in the city in large numbers. On 19 February, a group of Hindu protesters attacked many Kashmiri Muslims who had taken shelter behind the gates of the Dak Bungalow, beat them up mercilessly and tore their clothes. Soon thereafter, scores of Hindu youth brandishing swords emerged from the nearby Shahidi Chowk and attacked and injured seven persons.¹⁴⁹ Police on both occasions watched as mute spectators. A day earlier, a Muslim tailor's shop in the same area was vandalized and workers were assaulted. Violent incidents resulted in the city being placed under curfew. For several days, as nights approached, Jammu city exploded with huge noise created by simultaneous beating of drums and utensils and blowing of *shankh* from the rooftops in different quarters of the city, causing a scaring effect in nearby Muslim localities.¹⁵⁰ Amid an explosive situation like

this, rumours about killings of and arson against Kashmiri Muslims travelled along with frightened passengers to Kashmir, adversely impacting atmosphere, especially in Anantnag where people from almost every village happened to be away, working in Jammu or in transit there to and from different cities of Punjab during the winter. The situation was compounded by imposition of curfew that made it impossible to get to the truth.

Coupled with these developments, the State was under the grip of serious political uncertainty for months. Speculations were rife that the Congress Party wanted to dislodge Chief Minister G. M. Shah and form the government itself. Senior Congress leader and party in-charge of Jammu and Kashmir affairs, Arjun Singh, had also arrived in Srinagar to weigh the possibility of the change in the government. This fuelled rumours about sacking of Shah who, in any case, was unpopular among the people. A section of the media, notably a newspaper allegedly sympathetic to the then State Congress chief, was literally pouring its heart out in lambasting Shah and his government. As the Jammu situation had communal fallout in Kashmir, the mainstream media in Delhi blew up the incidents in the Valley out of proportion.

The newspaper reports gave an impression that Kashmir was burning in a communal fire where the minorities faced serious threat to their survival. Leading journalists, too, fell to the temptation of creating a situation of horror. In a write-up published in the *Indian Express*, H. K. Dua quoted an imaginary figure of “nearly three lakh” as the population of Kashmiri Pandits in 1947, which he claimed had dwindled to 70,000 by 1986 because of “discrimination and economic deprivation” that forced them to migrate to other parts of the country.¹⁵¹ That a senior journalist like him too chooses to outrightly ignore the Census of 1941 figures with regard to the total population of Kashmiri Pandits speaks of the sensation the media creates about developments in Kashmir. According to the Census of 1941, the total population of Hindus in Kashmir province was 85,538, including 5,888 in Muzaffarabad, now in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. After subtracting this number from the total population of Hindus, we get the figure of 79,629 as the total number of Hindus in Kashmir Valley which then comprised a sizeable section of non-Kashmiri Hindus like the Punjabi traders and the Dogra service class.

Kashmiri Pandits took out series of protest processions in Delhi, Bombay, Lucknow and other parts of the country where Kashmiri Muslims were vilified. Arun Nehru and Sheila Koul, both ministers in the Government of India and both of Kashmiri Pandit lineage, also spoke of the same at one such occasion.¹⁵² On 4 March, the Pandit community observed a mass strike in Kashmir. All shops and business establishments belonging to Kashmiri Pandits remained closed and no government employee from the community attended office. Temples also remained locked for the day. The KHAC spearheading the strike alleged that the “widespread loot and arson in the places of worship had taken place all over the valley.”

The ‘national media’ recklessly reported developments in Kashmir, forcing no less a person than the President of India, Giani Zail Singh, to say that the “newspapers had resorted to misrepresentation of situation and exaggerated the intensity of incidents.”¹⁵³ The *Mirwaiz* of Kashmir, Molvi Muhammad Farooq, reacting sharply to this misrepresentation, said that Kashmiri Muslims were extremely maligned and their positive role was ignored. In an interview, the *Mirwaiz* said:

I am within my rights to say that Kashmiri Muslims were exceedingly maligned and their positive role was overlooked. If Hindus are here today it is because of the brotherly and pleasant relations the Muslims always have had with them. But the power hungry and communal forces are conspiring and fanning communalism here.... I can say with certainty that no Muslim has cut any Hindu's throat here, nor molested any Hindu woman. The propaganda that Hindus want to migrate from here is a political contrivance and very wrong. There is no such atmosphere here in which Hindus would be forced to migrate. The Muslims provide them protection which they will continue to have without police, army and the Jan Sangh being there to protect them. Recently, the role of the Muslims was historic.¹⁵⁴

On ground, and in complete disagreement with what the media projected, the affected Kashmiri Pandit families praised their Muslim neighbours for coming to their rescue and pointed out that the miscreants responsible for violence had come from outside. The federal minister of state for home informed the Parliament that there was

no report of individual or collective migration of Kashmiri Pandits from Kashmir.¹⁵⁵ Noted social activist of India, Baba Amte, who was on ‘Knit India March’ from Kanyakumari to Kashmir, arrived in Srinagar around the same time. After visiting the affected places, he told media persons that before reaching Kashmir he thought things were really bad but having met people from different communities, he was returning as a happy person.¹⁵⁶ He commended the tradition of communal amity of Kashmiris.¹⁵⁷ Director General of Jammu and Kashmir Police, M. M. Khajuria, lauded the Muslims of Anantnag town for “doing a commendable job in protecting the people of the minority community.”¹⁵⁸ Interestingly, the Jamaat-i-Islami, a religio-political party of Kashmir that was accused of being behind the violence in Anantnag, was exonerated from any involvement by the Hindu Prabhandak Committee. The leaders of the Committee at a protest meeting held at Nagbal in Anantnag town spoke about the ‘constructive role’ of the party during the unfortunate incidents in the district.¹⁵⁹

On 6 March 1986, the Congress Party withdrew its support from the Shah Government and the next day, Jammu and Kashmir was placed under the Governor’s Rule. Amazingly, with this political development, the screaming banner lines and editorial commentaries on ‘alarming communal situation’ in Kashmir suddenly disappeared from the ‘national media’.

Notes and References

1. Statement of the Chief Minister in the Legislative Assembly on 17 August 1967.
2. *Weekly Roshni*, 10 August 1967.
3. In an interview with the author on 26 August, 2015.
4. *Weekly Roshni*, 10 August 1967.
5. *Wail of the Vale: Kashmir Stinks*, A publication of the Kashmir Hindu Action Committee, 6.
6. Bhat, *Kashmir: 1947 Se 1977 Tak*, 151.
7. *Weekly Roshni*, 10 August 1967.
8. Ibid.
9. Situation Report, Archives Repository, Kashmir. Parveen Akhtar reportedly raised slogans, *Naara-e-Takbeer*, *Islam* and *Naara-e-Risaalat*.
10. Statement of the Chief Minister in the Legislative Assembly on 17 August 1967.

11. Ibid.
12. Fortnightly diary ending 15 June 1964, of the District Magistrate, Srinagar, No. 634-36/DM, dated 20 June 1964.
13. Ibid.
14. Bazaz, *Kashmiri Pandit Agitation and Its Aftermath*, 13.
15. *Weekly Roshni*, 14 August 1967.
16. Jalaluddin Shah in an interview with the author on 5 August 2015.
17. *Weekly Roshni*, 21 August 1967.
18. *Wail of the Vale: Kashmir Stinks*, 3.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., 18.
21. Members of KHAC included Amarnath Vaishnavi, Shiban Kishen Ambardhar, Shiv Prasad Parimoo, Jialal Barbazu, Maharaj Krishen Dhobi, Ashok Kumar Lala, Autar Krishen Ogra, Pyarelal Durani, Balkrishen Handoo, Balji Seeru and Moti Lal. Local intelligence agency reported another eight members of KHAC as Tika Lal Tapiloo, Badri Nath Matoo, Jialal Khushu, Sridhar Joo Dhar, Triloki Nath Dhar, Makhan Lal Harkara and Harji Lal. It also listed as "Active Members of the Hindu Action Committee" Chander Shekhar Dhar, Amarnath Ganzu alias Faqir Chand, Shambhnath Kachru, Gopi Krishen, Kashinath Duloo, Niterpaul Shastri, Amarnath Kala, Satish Kumar Sarup, Triloki Nath Mattu, Shamlal Shala Shastri, Dwarkinath Bera, Lalji Chrangu, Motilal Qazi and Mohanlal Koul Pului.
22. Situation Report, Archives Repository, Kashmir.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. *Weekly Roshni*, 21 August 1967.
26. Situation Report, Archives Repository, Kashmir.
27. *The Islam*, 30 June 1937; *The Hadayat*, 21 June 1937; *The Islah*, 22 June 1937.
28. Koul, *Kashmir Then and Now*, 200.
29. *Weekly Roshni*, 21 August 1967.
30. Statement of the Chief Minister in the Legislative Assembly on 17 August 1967.
31. Bhat, *Kashmir: 1947 Se 1977 Tak*, 152.
32. Statement of the Chief Minister in the Legislative Assembly on 17 August 1967.
33. Police Diary, Archives Repository, Kashmir.
34. *Weekly Roshni*, 21 August 1967.
35. Ibid., 14 August 1967.
36. Koul, *Kashmir Then and Now*, 262.
37. In an e-mail to the author.
38. Other members of the *Mahaz* included Mufti Jalaluddin, Mufti Rashiduddin, Mufti Bashiruddin, Molvi Nooruddin, Ghulam Ahmad Mir, Muhammad Abdullah Rather, Sofi Ghulam Ahmad, Ghulam Hassan Faktoo, Abdur Rehman Shagoo, Saifuddin Qari, Molvi Muhammad Abbas Ansari, Ghulam Hassan Geelani, Baderuddin Handoo, Sadaruddin Mujahid, Khawaja Ali Shah, Abdur Rashid Kabli, Muhammad Anwar Ashai, Hissamuddin Banday, Qasim Shah Bukhari and Ghulam Mohiuddin Hamdani.

39. Jabalpur, a city in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, witnessed communal riots in February 1961 in which, according to official reports, 55 people died. Unofficial accounts put the death toll at more than 200. An affair between a Hindu girl and a Muslim boy was reportedly at the centre of the violence.
40. Communication of superintendent of police, Srinagar, bearing number 1739/44/C, dated 31 August 1967.
41. Situation Report, Archives Repository, Kashmir.
42. Ibid.
43. *Wail of the Vale: Kashmir Stinks*, 17.
44. Ibid., 22–23.
45. Special Report 'A', District Police Office, Srinagar No. 1745/50/C, dated 31 August 1967.
46. Photograph showing the body wrapped in the Tricolour published in the *Wail of the Valley*, a publication of the Kashmir Hindu Action Committee.
47. Special Report 'A', District Police Office, Srinagar No. 1745/50/C, dated 31 August 1967.
48. Situation Report of 27 August 1967.
49. Special Report 'A', Superintendent of Police, Srinagar's communication, bearing number 1769–73/C, dated 31 August 1967.
50. Bhat, *Kashmir: 1947 Se 1977 Tak*, 154.
51. Superintendent of police, Srinagar's communication, bearing number 1732–36K, dated 31 August 1967, copies, among others, endorsed to the Chief Secretary, Jammu and Kashmir and Inspector General of Police, Jammu and Kashmir.
52. Department of Information, Jammu and Kashmir Government, tele-printer message of 1 September 1967, quoting a Jammu datelined Press Trust of India (PTI) news report.
53. Situation report of the day.
54. Bhat, *Kashmir: 1947 Se 1977 Tak*, 153.
55. Confidential tele-printer message No. 3, dated 27 August 1967 from K. D. Uppal to G. D. Sharma.
56. Report of the minister's meeting with a representative gathering of Jammu Muslims, forwarded by Director of Information to the Chief Secretary, Jammu and Kashmir.
57. *Wail of the Vale: Kashmir Stinks*, 15.
58. Ibid., 32–33
59. Ibid., 5.
60. Ibid., 52.
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid., 16.
63. Ibid., 44.
64. Ibid., 20.
65. Ibid., 45–46.
66. The banned newspapers included *Martand*, *Nawai Kashmir*, *Roshni*, *Jyoti*, *Nav Jeevan* and *Rehnuma*.

67. Qasim, *Daastan-e-Hayat*, 296.
68. Bazaz, *Kashmiri Pandit Agitation and Its Aftermath*, 20.
69. Ibid.
70. Qasim, *Daastan-e-Hayat*, 296.
71. 'Hindus Not Safe In Kashmir', *Indian Express*, 22 September 1967.
72. Bazaz, *Kashmiri Pandit Agitation and Its Aftermath*, 20–21.
73. Secret communication sent by Srinivasan Vardan, Joint Secretary in the union ministry of home, 27 August 1967, to the Chief Secretary of Jammu and Kashmir wherein he was asked to "exercise vigilance and make adequate precautionary arrangements to keep communal and anti-social elements under check."
74. *Weekly Aaina*, 27 September 1967.
75. Ibid.
76. Bazaz, *Kashmiri Pandit Agitation and Its Aftermath*, 21.
77. Sharga, Dr B. N., Kashmiri Pandit Leaders, Kashmiri Pandit Network, <http://ikashmir.net/leaders/snfotedar.html>
78. Vide teleprinter message sent by Home Secretary, L. P. Singh, on 4 November 1967; Chief Minister G. M. Sadiq was asked by the Government of India to either extend the jurisdiction of the Raghubar Dayal Commission of Inquiry appointed by it to inquire into the communal incidents at Jammu on 25–26 August and at Srinagar on 27 August and 3 and 7 October or appoint the same Commission and with the same terms of reference under the Jammu and Kashmir Commission of Enquiry Act.
79. Home Department letter No. Home/ISA/2015/RTI/140/5010, dated 3 September 2015. Interestingly, the RTI application was responded within 48 hours of its receipt in the Home Department on 3 September 2015, giving an impression that piles of records accumulated over the last 48 years were scanned within such a short period. Justice Raghubar Dayal Commission of Inquiry was constituted vide SRO 471, dated 7 November 1967, issued under Home Department endorsement No. IS-212-A/67, dated Jammu 7 November 1967. The Commission was asked to submit its report by 30 April 1968. However, on 7 September 1968, the Commission approached the Government of Jammu and Kashmir for its continuance till 30 April 1969, which was not agreed to. The Secretary of the Commission was informed, "holding an enquiry so long after the few incidents of communal disturbances which occurred in the State more or less for the first time since 1947 would not serve the purpose for which the inquiry was instituted." (Letter of Additional Chief Secretary, Anwar Karim, IAS to Ashok Sen, Secretary, Commission of Inquiry on Communal Disturbances.) However, the time for the Commission to submit its report was extended till 31 October 1968. D. P. Kohli was the then Director, Central Bureau of Investigation. The State Government wrote to the Secretary Home, Government of India vide D.O. No 11992-CS/67-Pol, dated 9 November 1967, requesting to have the allegations of excessive use of force by police in August 1967 inquired by D. P. Kohli.
80. In an interview with the author on 5 October 2015.

81. In an interview with the author on 26 August 2015.
82. Mohammad Syeed Malik in an interview with the author on 5 September 2015.
83. Qasim, *Daastan-e-Hayat*, 295.
84. Ibid.
85. Bhat, *Kashmir: 1947 Se 1977 Tak*, 155.
86. *Wail of the Vale: Kashmir Stinks*, 25. The publication claimed that 50,000 people had assembled at Sheetal Nath on 25 August 1967 (p. 24). Incidentally, the carrying capacity of the ground where the protest meetings were held was no more than a couple of thousand and, on 25 August, the city was under curfew. Besides, the total population of the Pandit community in Kashmir then was about 60,000 only. Jallianwala Bagh is a public park in Amritsar, Punjab where British troops massacred hundreds of civilians and injured many more on 13 April 1919.
87. Ibid., 17.
88. Archival record, Archives Repository, Kashmir.
89. Letter No. 1200–01/CS, dated 30 August 1967, addressed by the Inspector General of Police to the secretary to government, home department.
90. Order issued by Chief Secretary P. K. Dhave on 1 September 1967.
91. Bazaz, *Kashmiri Pandit Agitation and Its Aftermath*, 24.
92. Situation Report of 27 August 1967, Archives Repository, Kashmir.
93. In an interview with the author on 26 August 2015.
94. In an interview with the author on 5 October 2015.
95. Ibid.
96. Statement of the Chief Minister in the Legislative Assembly on 17 August 1967.
97. Ibid.
98. Bazaz, *Kashmiri Pandit Agitation and Its Aftermath*, 13–14. A write-up published in the *Weekly Roshni* on 10 October 1967 mentions, besides municipal record and medical report, Parmeshwari's birth horoscope to have been seen by the police as proof of her being a major.
99. Ibid., 14
100. In an interview with the author on 5 September 2015.
101. Situation Report of 7 August 1967.
102. *Wail of the Vale: Kashmir Stinks*, 14.
103. Joint statement issued after KHAC reached an agreement with Home Minister Chavan on 3 September 1967.
104. Bazaz, *Kashmiri Pandit Agitation and Its Aftermath*, 13.
105. Ibid., 14.
106. Ibid.
107. Ibid.
108. Sharga, Dr B. N., Pandit Shiv Narain Fotedar, <http://ikashmir.net/leaders/snfotedar.html>
109. Ishaq, *Nida-e-Haq*, 353.
110. Qasim, *Daastan-e-Hayat*, 295.
111. Bazaz, *Kashmiri Pandit Agitation and Its Aftermath*, 15.

112. Ibid.
113. Ibid., 23.
114. Ibid.
115. Archival record, Archives Repository, Srinagar.
116. Bazaz, *Kashmiri Pandit Agitation and Its Aftermath*, 22.
117. Official report on incidents of loot and communal violence occurring on 4 October 1967, Archives Repository, Kashmir.
118. Ibid.
119. Ibid.
120. Ibid.
121. Ibid.
122. Ibid.
123. Ibid.
124. *Wail of the Vale: Kashmir Stinks*, 41.
125. *Weekly Aaina*, 15 October 1967.
126. Bhat, Sanaullah, *Kashmir: 1947 Se 1977 Tak*, 156.
127. Report of the Deputy Commissioner, Anantnag on the happenings in the Anantnag District, subsequent to the start of Hindu Agitation at Srinagar.
128. Ibid.
129. Ibid.
130. *Weekly Aaina*, 24 October 1967.
131. Ibid.
132. Ibid.
133. *Weekly Roshni*, 7 September 1967.
134. Bazaz, *Kashmiri Pandit Agitation and Its Aftermath*, 24.
135. Ibid.
136. *Wail of the Vale: Kashmir Stinks*, 17, 23–24, 26–27, 42.
137. Jalaluddin Shah in an interview with the author on 5 August 2015.
138. Dass narrated this and other events in an e-mail to the author on 11 August 2015.
139. *Weekly Roshni*, dated 21 August 1967.
140. Bazaz, *Kashmiri Pandit Agitation and Its Aftermath*, 8.
141. In an interview with the author on 5 September 2015.
142. Ibid.
143. Ibid.
144. Bazaz, *Kashmiri Pandit Agitation and Its Aftermath*, 11.
145. Ibid.
146. Two other members, who were nominated to the commission, were Shankar Prasad and Badr-ud-Din Tyabji. B. P. Bagchi, ICS, was the Secretary to the Commission.
147. *Kashmir Times*, 14 February and 3 March 1986.
148. Started by Dogra rulers, Darbar Move is an over 150 year old practice of moving main government offices for six months in winter to Jammu and for six summer months to Srinagar.

149. *Kashmir Times*, 20 February 1986.
150. *Weekly Ishaet*, 17–22 July 1986.
151. *Indian Express*, 3 March 1986.
152. *Weekly Ishaet*, 17–22 July 1986.
153. Ibid. Zail Singh made these remarks at the *Bazm-i-Faiz* function held at the Government College for Women, Maulana Azad Road, Srinagar in June 1986, where he declared Kashmir as home to secularism and secular forces.
154. Ibid., 20–26 June 1986.
155. Ibid., 18–24 April 1986.
156. Ibid.
157. *Srinagar Times*, 13 April 1986.
158. Ibid., 28 February 1986.
159. Reshi, Jawad Hussain, 'Jammu wa Kashmir Kay Mojoodah Haalaat', *Srinagar Times*, 30 April 1986.

Chapter Seven

Migration

Months before the first signs of militancy started showing, Kashmiri Pandits were already talking of mass migration from the Valley as a recourse to ‘dwindling employment opportunities’ for the community in Kashmir. Through the word of mouth as well, an impression was created in major cities of India that the Pandits in Kashmir were harassed, their temples desecrated and women molested. During the summer of 1988, H. N. Jattu, President of the All India Kashmiri Pandit Conference, spoke about the ‘silent exodus’ of Kashmiri Pandits, as members of the community were finding it hard to get government jobs. When he warned that if the situation was not changed for the better, the rest of the Kashmiri Pandits would also be forced to leave Kashmir;¹ he was not doing anything unusual.

Using the threat of migration, the leaders of the Kashmiri Pandit community had attempted blackmailing the government to concede their demands many a time in the past as well. When Maharaja Hari Singh accepted the recommendations of the Glancy Commission to ameliorate the condition of his long disempowered Muslim subjects, Kashmiri Pandits *en masse* rose in opposition, arguing that the entry of Muslims in government service would snatch their bread. However, when the government refused to accept their objections, the Pandits asked for permission to migrate from Kashmir. In a written representation, dated 27 April 1932, to the Maharaja, a copy of which was forwarded to the British Resident in Kashmir, the community said that it would not have “suffered so terribly had we taken to arson, loot, incendiaryism etc.” The representation further reads as follows:

We the Hindus of Kashmir therefore desire that we should be allowed to migrate to other parts in order to find a living there. Bread has been denied here—in the ‘Hindu Raj’—but we have

firm conviction that we shall not receive stones in other places in 'British India' under 'the Crown'. We therefore request your exalted person to graciously grant us the boon of 'migrating' to other places.²

The threat of migration was held out in 1967 as well when communal tension arising out of an intercommunity marriage was used as an excuse to seek government jobs disproportionate to the population of the community. Therefore, when Jattu threatened mass migration, he was not saying anything new. Pertinently, this was the time when the Muslim youth, armed with degrees in different disciplines, were competing for and securing government jobs, earlier forbidden for them, on merit in numbers.

Around this time, there was an effort being made by a section of Kashmiri Pandits to fuel feelings of the community's alleged victimhood. The Yuvak Sabha, one of the organizations representing them, was seen as playing into the hands of the Hindu fundamentalists of India. Jattu alleged that fundamentalism in Kashmiri Pandits was on an increase and that Hindu fundamentalist and communal elements were a great threat to the secular traditions of Jammu and Kashmir.³ He alleged that the Yuvak Sabha was dominated by elements belonging to the RSS and the Shiv Sena.⁴

Outside Kashmir, stories about imaginary persecution of Kashmiri Pandits were routinely circulated, and the narrator would go to any length in weaving lies. In January 1980, Ghulam Jeelani Khan of Rainawari, a quarter of the old Srinagar city, then a young Government employee, accompanied one of his neighbours and close friend, Shiban Kishen Kak, to Delhi on the latter's persuasion. An employee of the education department in the State Government, Kak had sold to him the idea of making some extra bucks by selling Kashmiri shawls in Delhi during the ongoing winter. Initially reluctant, Khan availed one month's leave and set out for Delhi with his friend where they were joined by two more Kashmiri Pandit boys, Surinder Kumar Raina and Shiban Lal Dhar (Hakeem), employees of the All India Handicrafts Board, Government of India, and Agriculture Department of Jammu and Kashmir Government, respectively. On their first day in Delhi, the foursome went to the house of a wealthy Sikh in Tilak Nagar

who had been recommended to them by Kak's elder brother, Mohan Kishen. Unfortunately, for them, the prospective customer did not appear interested in buying the stuff. Finding it hard to persuade him, Kak suddenly broke into tears and told the Sikh gentleman that they were educated unemployed Kashmiri Pandits forced by circumstances to do the odd job of vending shawls outside Kashmir as back home all avenues of employment were closed on their community. He narrated a made-up story of persecution and harassment of Pandits in Kashmir at the hands of the Muslim majority and how it was impossible for even a highly educated member of his community to get employment. The trick worked and the gentleman bought two shawls in the belief that he had helped the poor victims of communal prejudice. However, a shocked Khan, who was positioned few steps behind the Pandit trio, could not stand the false tale of demonizing his community. He came forward, introduced himself to the buyer as a Kashmiri Muslim, and told him that the Pandit boy had cooked up the story to blackmail him emotionally into buying shawls and that none of them was unemployed but earned handsome salaries as government employees. The Sikh buyer felt cheated and threw the two shawls on Kak's face in a rage. He chased the Pandit boys out of his premises, using all kinds of invectives that his vocabulary helped him with. Khan cut short his stay at Delhi and returned home.⁵

Kashmiri Muslims who visited Indian cities those days for business or higher education were often confronted with questions, such as why do you kill Hindus, molest their women and destroy temples? At that point in time, there was no militancy, no gunshots were heard and no grenades were hurled in Kashmir. Dr Mohammad Shafi who was pursuing a PG course in haematology at the Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences, Chandigarh, in 1982 recalls:

One day I was in the administrative section to sort out an issue. The concerned assistant before addressing my problem asked me, "Why do you Muslims torture Hindus and molest their women in Kashmir and why do you demolish temples there? Obviously, he was fed with propaganda. I told him to visit the place and know the truth himself, upon which he said that Kashmiri Pandit students tell them such stories."⁶

During 1989, a mass uprising, supported by armed guerrillas, against Indian rule broke out in Kashmir. The situation deteriorated fast, resulting in the collapse of civilian administration and imposition of direct rule by New Delhi. The early period of the armed uprising saw selective killing of some people supporting or perceived to be supporting the Indian rule over Kashmir. In the face of massive rallies chanting anti-India slogans across cities and towns of Kashmir, the writ of the State was trampled as it could not control an eruption of anti-India and pro-independence sentiments. Huge public demonstrations, firing by paramilitary forces, attacks on government installations and civilian killings became a daily routine. Several Kashmiri Pandits were also killed, mostly on allegations of being informers of the government. The community that was comfortable with the Indian sovereignty over Kashmir could not identify with the fast catching-up pro-*azadi* euphoria among the majority community. They felt insecure and within a matter of days, nearly all of them migrated to Jammu and other parts of India. Ever since their migration, two opposite versions on this development have emerged. The Pandits allege that members of their community were selectively killed to force them quit Kashmir, and that they received threats from armed militants to leave the Valley as well. The Muslims, on the other hand, accused them of betraying their neighbours by opting for the 'government plan' to temporarily move the Hindu minority out of Kashmir and facilitate a harsh military action against the majority community. They cite umpteen instances of indiscriminate firing, enforced disappearance of civilians, custodial deaths, arson and rape⁷ by men in uniform or allegedly acting under different government agencies, following the Pandit migration to make their point.

The target of the first militant attack on an individual was a Muslim police officer, Ali Muhammad Watali,⁸ and the first known militancy-related civilian casualty was Mohammad Yusuf Halwai, a Muslim activist of the pro-India National Conference, shot dead on 21 August 1989 by unidentified gunmen.⁹ A month later, on 18 September 1989, militants gunned down Tika Lal Tapiloo, a Kashmiri Pandit leader of the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP). This was followed by killing, on 4 November 1989, of Neel Kant Ganjoo, who, as sessions judge, had sentenced to death Mohammad Maqbool

Bhat,¹⁰ the founder of Kashmir Liberation Front that spearheaded an armed rebellion against Indian rule. Lassa Koul, the director of Doordarshan Srinagar, a unit of Indian Government-run television network, was killed on 13 February 1990, followed by the killing of Pushkar Nath Handoo, Assistant Director in the State Information Department and formerly a Private Secretary to Governor Jagmohan, on 1 March 1990. Mir Mustafa, former legislator, was kidnapped on 23 March 1990 and, two days later, his body was recovered. Professor Mushir-ul-Haq, Vice Chancellor of the University of Kashmir, and his Private Secretary, Abdul Gani, were kidnapped on 6 April 1990, and their bodies were found on 10 April 1990. *Mirwaiz* of Kashmir, Molvi Mohammad Farooq, was gunned down at his home on 21 May 1990. On 23 December 1990, senior politician Maulana Mohammad Sayeed Masoodi was gunned down. These high profile killings were political rather than communal in nature.¹¹ Besides Muslims being the first target of attacks and killings, the maiden militancy related abduction had a Muslim victim as well. Rubaiya Sayeed, 23-year old medical intern and daughter of the then India's Home Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, was kidnapped on 8 December 1989 by an armed resistance group that demanded release of its five jailed members in lieu of her release.¹²

Journalist Askari Zaidi, who reported for the *Times of India* from Srinagar during that period, recalls that a list of informers of the Intelligence Bureau (IB) in Kashmir was leaked following which some targeted killings took place at the hands of armed militants that created panic.¹³ There are others, who subscribe to this view. Journalist Anuradha Bhasin observes:

Many of them [Kashmiri Pandits] were shot dead for their affiliations with the intelligence agencies or their role in government decision-making. Kashmiri Pandits occupied a prominent place in government jobs and bureaucracy despite being a microscopic minority in the Valley. Were they killed because they were Kashmiri Pandits or because they were being seen as government agents?¹⁴

Omar Abdullah, former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, also echoed a similar view when he told a newspaper reporter: "None

of us can remember when was a Kashmiri Pandit targeted for being a Kashmiri Pandit.”¹⁵

Twenty-five years after the Pandit migration, Amarjit Singh Dulat, former chief of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), foreign intelligence agency of India, who headed the IB in Kashmir during those turbulent years, admitted that the “IB, in J&K, had a fair amount of Kashmiri Pandits” and it “had a sinister reputation in the Kashmiri mind. Part of it was because since Independence, the IB had basically been running Kashmir, advising the Home Ministry and reporting directly to the Prime Minister on whatever happened there.”¹⁶ He has counted many killed Kashmiri Pandits as his men in Kashmir and also credited three Pandit officials with the revival of the IB in the Valley in 1990 after the total collapse of intelligence gathering apparatus owing to the eruption of militancy. “They sneaked in and out of all sorts of places, and got the humint (human intelligence) flowing again ... [and] rendered yeoman service to the nation.”¹⁷

The eruption of militancy saw an open war flaring up between the Indian State and the armed Muslim rebel groups, turning Kashmir into a battle ground. Tens of thousands of Muslims poured onto the streets of the Valley every day, demanding freedom from India. On 1 March 1990, about a million people from different parts of Kashmir descended on the capital city of Srinagar and marched to the summer headquarters of the United Nations Military Observers Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) in uptown Sonawar to handover memoranda seeking freedom of Kashmir from Indian rule. The massive demonstrations continued for days without break, but not a single member of the Pandit community or their property was harmed by the demonstrators. Vijay Bakaya, prominent Kashmiri Pandit and former Chief Secretary of Jammu and Kashmir, puts it thus:

Our community should not forget that those thousands who came out on the street did not attack or vandalise a single Pandit house.¹⁸

Significantly, an Indian mainstream political party, Rashtriya Seva Dal, after a visit to Jammu and Kashmir in April 1990, in its report, published by the *Economic and Political Weekly* held that

the exodus of Hindu refugees ...is due to the tremendous fear created by the large rallies and angry demonstrations against the Government by the majority community. The Muslims claim and the refugees agree that there were no communal incidents or burning and looting of houses, misbehaviour with women, etc. The refugees say that they left their houses because they feared that something of this kind would happen soon.¹⁹

The massive uprising was followed by clamping of indefinite curfew and indiscriminate killings. Bodies of scores of local Muslims killed by Indian security forces for either being militants or their sympathizers or by militants for being informers of the government were recovered every day. The civil society and human rights organizations put the death toll of Kashmiri Muslims since 1989 at about 100,000. The government, however, claims that about 45,000 persons were killed.²⁰ Most of the deaths took place under controversial circumstances. Draconian laws, such as the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) and the Public Safety Act (PSA),²¹ taken recourse to by the government, further deteriorated the human rights situation.

An atmosphere of alarm and dread prevailed in which the minority community of Kashmiri Pandits embarked upon en masse migration. They alleged that Muslims threatened them with death if they did not leave Kashmir. They also accused Muslim neighbours of nocturnal sloganeering from the public address systems of mosques, spreading dread and asking them to vacate Kashmir. In some specific cases, intimidation, mostly by unknown or masked faces, was real which added to the fear psychosis generated by the massive public revolt. Joginder Nath, a public school teacher, C. N. Makoo, a businessman in army contracting, Jai Krishan Dhar, a handicrafts salesman in Srinagar, for instance, found notices 'hanging outside their houses or workplaces' accusing them of either being agents of Indian intelligence agencies or working as informers for police. The notices were hand-written on letterheads of militant outfits in which the accused were ordered to leave Kashmir immediately.²² The Pandits living in isolated pockets of the valley especially felt threatened.

On the other hand, Muslims believe that the Pandits played into the hands of a vindictive government out to crush their rebellion through strong army action. During the first days of the massive

uprising, mosques in many areas of the Valley reverberated with Islamic slogans, but it would be an exaggeration to suggest that the loud speakers were used to chase Pandits away. This was done as a means to cause simultaneous protests across Kashmir, and it continued even after the Pandits had migrated from Kashmir. Anuradha Bhasin raises some pertinent questions:

Whether the Islamic sloganeering from mosques was widespread or this happened only in select pockets, since there is no recorded document or media reports, and since it was never followed in later months, the truth is likely to be a casualty with imagination and prejudice clouding the real picture. But the moot question is: Would the response be so uniform in the event of one or even all mosques of the Valley echoing the Islamic slogans? Was there some underlying unheard, unsaid, understood threat that motivated the Pandits from across the Valley to migrate en masse in just two days? Why in just those two days the entire scenario changed? Why did the 'Islamic' militarisation suddenly become threatening since the killings had been going on for months? The media obviously has done no homework.²³

Muslims generally feel that in their migration from Kashmir, the Pandits played into the hands of a repressive government determined to kill them in large numbers. The Pandits, on the other hand, believe that Kashmiri Muslims were bent on driving them out and that the majority of them looked the other way when militants threatened them with death. That, however, is as far-fetched as to think of each Kashmiri Pandit as part of repressive state machinery. As the majority of the migrating Pandits were unaware of any Government plan to shift them to Jammu and other places temporarily to pave way for a massive crackdown on Muslims without any collateral damage to the minority community, there were countless instances when Muslims pleaded with their Pandit neighbours not to leave their homes. O. N. Trissal records his personal experience as follows:

In the late 1989, when militancy surfaced in the Valley, the Muslims in general, whether as a neighbour, friend or a colleague asked their Pandit brothers not to leave homes and provided security to them. Many Muslims accommodated Pandit families

in their homes to save them from militant attacks. There are instances when Muslim ladies, at the risk of their lives, stood at the doors of Pandit houses, to stop militants from entering their houses. Not only this, but when militancy gained the upper hand and the common Muslim himself came under the threat of the gun, timely information was provided to the Pandits so that they flee to safety.²⁴

Trissal's compatriot and co-migrant, Professor Manohar Nath Tikoo shares a similar experience:

I still remember that fateful day when I was forced by none other than my own wife and daughters to leave. All my Muslim neighbours came to my home bidding my family a fond farewell with tearful eyes. I and my neighbours never wanted my family to leave Kashmir but there was definitely a massive psychological fear created by unknown agencies against the Kashmiri Pandits which forced us to leave. Although the fact remains that not a single Muslim forced us to leave.²⁵

The allegation that Muslim neighbours, friends and colleagues of Kashmiri Pandits turned against them and that they kept awake all through the night of 19 January, as frenzied mobs on the streets and inside mosques called for their extermination²⁶ is, to put it mildly, a canard. However, there are many who refuse to absolve the Muslim masses of involvement in the migration of the Pandits. Journalist Pradeep Magazine, himself a Kashmiri Pandit, writes:

Whenever the Pandit exodus from the Valley is debated, anyone who says that the Muslim masses are not to blame, but it is our fear of terrorist violence that led us to flee, is virtually excommunicated. The sense is that you are either with us or with "them." There are no shades of grey.²⁷

In April 1990, Justice V. M. Tarkunde visited Kashmir and in his report on Kashmir observed:

Hindus have received full cooperation from the local Muslims. The Muslims shared their rations and other items of day to day requirements with them. There is total communal harmony in

Kashmir. Those people who had come out had either over-reacted to the situation or had done so because of certain other reasons which could be winter, curfew, or closure of offices and educational institutions. Not a single case of looting or arson of non-Muslim property had taken place.²⁸

The allegation of 'frenzied mobs on streets and in mosques' gives an absolutely false impression that the Pandit houses were surrounded by blood thirsty Muslims, forcing them to migrate. At the same time, it raises an important question:

How would it be possible, under unrelenting curfew from 17 January itself with shoot at sight orders, Muslims managed to assemble and surround Pandit habitations on the night of 19 January, and then within minutes of this Pandits managed to pack their belongings, seek friendly passage from 'this hostile crowd', call up state run SRTC and then drive away under armed escort?²⁹

Rekha Chowdhary approaches the issue of 'forced' mass migration of the Pandits through a set of three questions. First, was the espousal of religious sentiments underlying the (separatist) movement the reason for the exodus of the Pandits? Second, what has been the response of the Kashmiri separatist leadership to the question of exodus and return of the Pandits? Third, was the exodus a result of the lack of trust between the Muslims and Pandits? Her observations are very important to have a better understanding of the issue. She writes:

In response to the first question, though one can refer to the role played by the fringe organizations that tried to give a religious colour to the movement in early 1990 (the time the exodus took place) and their use of mosques and media to threaten the minorities, yet the scale at which the exodus took place cannot be attributed to this factor alone. The Pandits left the Valley in a situation of chaos and uncertainty as the Valley was in the grip of terror and there was total collapse of political authority and order. Not only the Pandits, but even the Muslims identified with the Indian state were targeted by the militants and many of them were forced to flee from Kashmir. Lot of brunt of the militant activities was to be faced by the

political activists, especially those belonging to the National Conference....

As regards the response of the Kashmiri separatist leadership to the question of exodus and their return, most of them have expressed regret about the exodus of Pandits and blamed their migration to the Indian state. In recent period, almost every one of the separatists has argued that Kashmir and Kashmiri culture is incomplete without Pandits and has made appeals to them to come back to the Valley.

In response to the third question, it is important to note the absence of acrimony between Kashmiri Pandits and Muslims before and after the exodus. There was quite a shared space between the two communities. Apart from speaking the same language and sharing the same cultural ethos, they participated in each other's festivals and shared each other's moments of happiness and grief. So much so that they even shared the common spiritual space.... The bond between the Muslims and Pandits was visible all through up to the period of their exodus. Even during 1990, when Pandits left the Valley, they carried the memories of goodwill and cooperation from their Muslim neighbours and friends.³⁰

In addition to that, Chowdhary enumerates two factors that reflect upon the relationship between the Muslims and Pandits. In the first place, she points out that a few thousand Pandit families that chose to live in Kashmir did not feel any threat to their lives from their Muslim neighbours, and their stay in the Valley was possible mainly due to the protection given to them by the Muslim community and the trust that existed between the two communities.³¹ The second factor, she argues, is related "to the continuing bond between the Pandits and Muslims even after exodus." She points to "a strong feeling in Kashmir that is being articulated forcefully for the last few years, that Kashmir is not complete without the Kashmiri Pandits."³²

There are no two opinions about the majority of Kashmiri Pandits feeling a sense of insecurity over the sudden turn of events. Being pro-India, like some other Muslim groups and political parties, the community felt vulnerable and the killing of some community members caused panic. Columnist Hassan Zainagairee believes that the murder of Tika Lal Tapiloo and Neel Kanth Ganjoo could have

been “digestible by the community,” but the killing of a man like advocate Prem Nath Bhat, “who hailed the role of ‘fundamentalist’ Jamat-e-Islami in according protection to harassed Pandit Community in 1986 violence in Islamabad [Anantnag] and acknowledged Islam as Din-e-Insaniyat (religion of humanity),” and the brutal way in which the Ganjoo couple was eliminated in Sopore made the Pandits “feel insecure and worried about their future.”³³ Another reason often cited to have caused the exodus is an advertisement purportedly from the militant organization, Hizbul Mujahideen, published in April 1990, four months after the mass migration had started and bulk of the Pandits had already left Kashmir, threatening “such of the Kashmiri Pandits as are responsible for atrocities on Muslims” to leave Kashmir within 48 hours. Journalist Ahmed Ali Fayyaz recalls:

Many of the Kashmiri Pandits, out of the wave of fear generated by a chain of killings, had already moved out of the ‘Paradise’. It was probably April 14 (1990) that I went to DC Budgam Mr Trisal, who was a KP from Pulwama, and suggested we should reach out to the Pandits who had stayed back but needed some reassurance. We decided to rope in some more from the local society and clergy and visit them next day. Unlike other areas, few had migrated from my district headquarters. Same evening, a handwritten statement in Urdu with a given heading landed at newspaper offices. It asked ‘anti-movement KPs [Kashmiri Pandits]’ to vacate Kashmir ‘within 48 hours’. As it appeared in Al-safa next morning, almost everybody left in panic. Mr Trisal told me that there was none to be visited. Curfew had been imposed in Srinagar and elsewhere. With DC’s help, I managed to reach Al-Safa office in an ambulance in an attempt to meet editor Mohammad Shaban Vakil who was reluctant to publish that statement but had little spine to defy an ‘order’. I found the office at Sarai Bala shut and sealed.³⁴

If there was any hidden plan of the government in creating and feeding to this sense of insecurity and moving the Pandits out of Kashmir, the majority of them did not know about it. However, it is almost impossible to find someone in the Valley who does not hold Jagmohan responsible for escalating the fear among the Pandits and supervising their migration. In popular Kashmiri perception,

"Governor Jagmohan represents a 'hate figure' sent from Delhi to evacuate Pandits from the Valley and suppress the Muslim population there for whom he had a paranoiac feeling that all of them are pro-Pakistani terrorists."³⁵

Jagmohan Malhotra, a former bureaucrat, who had earlier courted notoriety for 'bulldozing a Muslim habitation' at Turkaman Gate in old Delhi during the Emergency imposed in 1975 in India,³⁶ was appointed as governor of Jammu and Kashmir for the second time in January 1990. When he took over the gubernatorial assignment, he declared that he had come to Kashmir as a 'nursing orderly' rather than a governor. However, immediately after assuming office, he made his intentions known when he declared all Kashmiri Muslims as militants and, in the same breath, highlighted the need to wipe out militants completely to bring normalcy in the Valley. Victoria Schofield quotes Jagmohan as saying:

Every Muslim in Kashmir is a militant today. All of them are for secession from India. I am scuttling Srinagar Doordarshan's programmes because everyone there is a militant... The situation is so explosive that I can't go out of the Raj Bhavan. But I know what is going on, minute by minute. The bullet is the only solution for Kashmir. Unless the militants are fully wiped out, normalcy can't return to the valley.³⁷

Journalist Zahir-ud-din recalls a televised threat Jagmohan held out at Kashmiris on 20 January 1990 to "behave or I will teach you a lesson."³⁸ Jagmohan's reappointment as governor was read in the Valley as New Delhi's statement to suppress the rebellion in Kashmir firmly. The newly appointed governor had his own ideas of tackling the challenge. Muslims in Kashmir believed that he was sent to silence their 'cry for *azadi*' by killing them in large numbers. He made no bones about being ruthless in his ways. An *Asia Watch Report* described the situation thus:

Jagmohan and the security forces sought to end the militancy and the mass protests through the increased use of force. Round-the-clock curfew was imposed for days at a time in major towns, paramilitary troops conducted large-scale searches and arrests, and peaceful protests were met with gunfire.³⁹

The governor's policy of bullet caused eruption of violence in Kashmir as never before. One of his seniormost officers, Ashok Jaitley, later observed that Jagmohan did in five months what the militants could not have achieved in five years.⁴⁰ In five months of his tenure, which was cut short because of the bloodbath of mourners carrying the body of Kashmir's chief cleric, *Mirwaiz Molvi Mohammad Farooq*,⁴¹ as many as six major massacres involving Indian paramilitary troops took place in Kashmir, including at Gaw Kadal, Alamgari Bazar, Handwara, Mashali Mohalla, Zakoora-Tengpora Bypass and Islamia College. The majority community was caught up in a horrifying situation, a quick look of which can be had from the following excerpt from a Srinagar-based newspaper article:

Every day scores of people were fed to guns in well planned operations. Scores would be picked up during crackdowns, only to return as mutilated corpses or disappearing or maimed irreversibly. Molestation of womenfolk was used as weapon to inflict insult to the community. Dozens of colonies were torched and razed to ground. Humiliating crackdowns and stories of inhuman tortures would put Gestapo and Mossad to shame. Mass rapes were committed by the armed forces. The blood and flesh of Kashmiri youth became a sought after fodder.⁴²

Prominent Kashmiri Pandit and human rights activist, H. N. Wanchoo,⁴³ who, along with his family, refused to migrate from Kashmir and instead engaged himself in providing legal help to Muslim victims of the government excesses, felt that Jagmohan wanted to "slaughter Muslims."⁴⁴ Reflecting on those terrible days, human rights activist, Khurram Parvez observes:

Our memory is our weapon. 19th January 1990 in Kashmir is remembered as the beginning of renewed policy of Indian State's brutality by installing Governor Jagmohan. And every day since then has become an anniversary of massacres, killings, disappearances, rapes, torture and arson.⁴⁵

Once seated in the Raj Bhawan, Jagmohan wasted no time in implementing his ideas. Within 24 hours of imposition of the Governor's rule, over 50 unarmed Muslims were gunned down by Central Reserve

Police Force (CRPF) personnel at Gaw Kadal in uptown Srinagar. The dead were among hundreds of people protesting against the excesses committed by Indian paramilitary forces during the overnight raids across Srinagar. Many were injured. A strict curfew, which remained in force for over a fortnight without relaxation, was imposed throughout Kashmir. Simultaneously, hundreds of government and security forces vehicles were pressed into service to transport Kashmiri Pandits out of the Valley. The Governor was blamed, not without reason, for plotting and executing their migration. A Kashmiri Pandit later spoke of Jagmohan's complicity thus:

There can be no dispute about the fact that Kashmiri Pandit community was made a scapegoat by Jagmohan, some self-styled leaders of our community and other vested interests.... [T]he plan was to make the K. P.'s [Kashmiri Pandits] migrate from the valley so that the mass uprising against occupation forces could be painted as communal flare up.... Some self-styled leaders of the Pandit community [...] begged the Pandits to migrate from the valley. We were told that our migration was very vital for preserving and protecting 'Dharam' [religious integrity] and the unity and the integrity of India. We were told that our migration would pave the way for realizing the dream of Akhand Bharat [undivided India].... We were made to believe that our migration was very important for Hinduism and for keeping India together.... We were fooled and we were more than willing to become fools.⁴⁶

Jagmohan's complicity in an 'engineered migration' of, what he called, "frightened pigeons and forsaken community"⁴⁷ was evident from the fact that the Administration convinced the migrating Pandits about their moving out temporarily and returning soon after the uprising was done with. A migrant Pandit, K. L. Koul, writes:

Pandits were told that the government has plans of killing about one lakh Kashmiri Muslims in order to overcome the uprising against India. They were assured that once the proposed massacre in Kashmir was completed and the movement curbed, they would be sent back to the Valley. My community now understands that it was a very crude way of painting the mass

uprising against India as nothing but a communal flare up. The Indian government tried to fool the world by depicting the uprising as a handiwork of Muslim Fundamentalists who had turned against non-Muslims and had thrown them out of their homes. I know that my community has lost the affection, love, respect and goodwill of Kashmiri Muslims for having betrayed them. I feel ashamed to admit that my community has stabbed the Muslims in the back. This all happened at the instance of Jagmohan. Some self-styled Pandit leaders exploited the situation and Pandits became refugees in their own land.⁴⁸

Many members of the Pandit community who, despite odds, stayed put in Kashmir confirm that their brethren believed in what Jagmohan told them. Motilal Bhat observes:

[Those who left] thought they would be gone for three or four months, and that they would return when things improved ... no one expected to stay there for years.⁴⁹

Wajahat Habibullah, a senior Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer who served as special commissioner of Anantnag District in South Kashmir under Jagmohan, alludes to the latter's complicity in the Pandit migration. Habibullah alleges that the Governor turned down his advice of discouraging mass migration of the Pandits through a television broadcast, advertising the request of Muslims to them not to leave Kashmir. The Muslims had met the officer in hundreds to dissuade the Pandits from leaving Kashmir.⁵⁰ Habibullah recalls:

I called Governor Jagmohan to ask that he telecast an appeal to Pandits that they stay in Kashmir, assuring their safety. Unfortunately, no such appeal came, only an announcement that to ensure security to Pandits, "refugee" camps were being set up in every district of the Valley, and Pandits who felt threatened could move to these camps rather than leave the Valley. Those Pandits in service who felt threatened were free to leave their stations in the Valley; they would continue to be paid salary. Predictably, this announcement confirmed the perception of threat and escalated Pandit migration.⁵¹

Jagmohan's complicity was further unveiled by Kuldeep Nayyar, senior Indian journalist, who was among the first from his tribe to demystify the Pandit exodus. Samir Kumar Das writes:

He [Kuldeep Nayyar] even accused him [Jagmohan] of planning and engineering the entire exercise in some of his articles, published widely in a number of mainstream newspapers. Senior journalists in Jammu and Kashmir, who met Jagmohan several days before the exodus, endorse the viewpoint, quoting him: 'The Kashmiri Pandits are safe targets for militants. There should be strongarm methods against militants to the extent of frightening the Muslim population through demonstration of the might of the Indian state. Ruthless operations in different localities of Srinagar could be fruitful counter-insurgency operations. But in some areas, there is mixed population and Pandits may become targets of security forces'. The journalists maintain that Jagmohan's mindset that he wanted to colour and present militancy as a fundamentalist 'anti-Hindu' movement was betrayed.⁵²

Askari Zaidi felt that the Jagmohan Administration made no effort to infuse confidence among the migrating Pandits or stop them from leaving Kashmir. "Through the developing situation the Administration could have foreseen such a scenario but did nothing to stop it from unfolding even when it could have done so."⁵³ Instead, it appeared pushing for the migration. Besides providing incentives to the migrating Pandits, the Governor also announced that his government would not be able to guarantee their safety, if they decided to remain in the Valley.⁵⁴ Neerja Mattoo makes the following observation:

The Government of the time instead of instilling a sense of security among them [Kashmiri Pandits] chose the easy path of letting them leave, and not only did it allow them to leave but also sort of facilitated [their migration] and put them on a kind of dole.⁵⁵

Social activist and author, Balraj Puri, recalling his visit to Kashmir along with Inder Mohan in the second week of March 1990, alludes

to the involvement of the Jagmohan Administration in the migration of Pandits thus:

At scores of meetings to which we were invited during our short but hectic visit, Kashmiri Muslims expressed a genuine feeling of regret over the migration of Kashmiri Pandits and urged us to stop and reverse it. Encouraged by the popular mood, we formed a joint committee of two communities with the former chief justice of the High Court, Mufti Bahauddin Farooqi, as president, the Kashmiri Pandit leader, H. N. Jattu, as vice-president, and a leading advocate, Ghulam Nabi Hagroo, as general secretary, in order to allay the apprehensions of Kashmiri Pandits.... A number of Muslim leaders and parties, including militant outfits, also appealed to the Pandits not to leave their homes. Jattu welcomed and endorsed their appeals, but soon migrated to Jammu himself. He told me that soon after the joint committee of the prominent members of the two communities was set up, the governor sent a DSP to him with an air ticket for Jammu, a jeep to take him to the airport, an offer of accommodation at Jammu, and advice to leave Kashmir immediately.⁵⁶

Post-migration, some Kashmiri Pandits wrote letters to newspapers or their friends in Kashmir in which they claimed that the government agencies had forced them to leave Kashmir. Rajnath Turki, a Pandit migrant putting up at Shastri Nagar, Jammu, wrote to his friend in Srinagar, Mushtaq Wani, Manager, JKPC, Brick and Tile Unit, Pampore, that he had migrated to Jammu in July only "when the security people at Karan Nagar forced us to leave."⁵⁷ Journalist Tavleen Singh met a Hindu shopkeeper, Jai Kishen, at Sopore who told her that most of the Hindus had left in the dead of the night at Jagmohan's behest, and that he did not go because he felt no danger from his Muslim neighbours.⁵⁸ Another Kashmiri Pandit who also did not migrate because he "did not feel insecure nor were the women in his family insulted or threatened" told the Committee for Initiative on Kashmir that people had left after a directive from H. N. Jattu that "all Hindus should leave the Valley by April 1990."⁵⁹ In a letter published in the *Al-safa* on 18 September 1990, K. L. Koul of Chanpora in Srinagar writes:

In the first week of February 1990, a word was sent to the members of the Pandit community in Kashmir and they were asked to migrate to safer places. This message from the former Governor Jagmohan was conveyed to the Pandit community through some self styled Pandit leaders. Pandits were told that the government had plans of killing about one lakh to one lakh fifty thousand Kashmiri Muslims particularly, the youth in order to overcome the uprising against India. Pandits were assured that they would be looked after well, that they would be provided free relief, free ration, jobs and free accommodation. Pandits were assured that once the proposed massacre of the Kashmiri Muslims was completed and the movement was curbed, they would be sent back to the Valley. That is how the Pandits left.⁶⁰

Besides ferrying Kashmiri Pandits out of the Valley in officially arranged vehicles as part of a major evacuation operation, the government also airlifted many families to Jammu. These families were provided free passes and directed to rush to the airport to board specially arranged aircrafts there. Abdul Majid Mattu who was booked on a flight to Amritsar on 1 March 1990 recalls:

Upon contacting the check-in counter, we were told that the Srinagar-Amritsar-Delhi flight would leave late in the afternoon as some unscheduled special flights from Srinagar to Jammu were on the priority list. We had therefore to wait and while doing so, I came across a friend who incidentally was a senior civil servant. It was through him that I came to know that these special flights had been arranged by the Government to airlift Kashmiri Pandits to Jammu. This confirmed the earlier information that special arrangements for transport of Pandit families by road to Jammu were already underway.... I met another friend and colleague, Mr. Arjan Nath and he appeared visibly tense. I enquired from him where he was going and was stunned to be told that he had been handed over some cyclostyled 'slips' for him and his family with instructions to pack up and proceed to the airport. They had been escorted from their house at Rawalpora and it was quite evident from their appearance that this was being done against their wishes. I was shown these cyclostyled 'slips' which were addressed to the Airport Officer with directions to allow the bearers to board the chartered flights. While watching this

sad and unfortunate state of affairs, I came across an old fellow, Ms. Aparna. She had with her, her old mother and three children and was sitting on the floor in a corner. I approached her and enquired about where she was going. She narrated the same story as told by Mr. Arjan Nath and, requesting to help her in checking in, handed over five such 'slips' to me.⁶¹

Jagmohan has denied allegations of engineering the Pandit migration and his role in indiscriminate killing of civilians in Kashmir. A good part of his book, *My Frozen Turbulence in Kashmir*, is devoted to dismiss the accusation. However, the evidence that he produces in his defence includes an unpublished official press release of 7 March 1990 (newspapers in Kashmir then did not carry any official handout or had suspended publication) and official reports of his subordinate bureaucrats, such as the chief secretary, additional chief secretary (Home) and additional director general of police.⁶² His assertion, however, does not provide an answer to why most of the Kashmiri Pandits fled from their homes immediately after his arrival in Kashmir. In the words of a blogger:

While most of these [Pandit] killings happened after January of 1990, there has been no plausible reason given to why most of the Pandits fled on the night of 19 January 1990. The only coincidences close to this date are joining of Jagmohan as governor of J&K one day prior and the repeated massacres by Indian forces right after 19 January.⁶³

The majority of Kashmiri Pandits, unwittingly or out of fear for their lives, fell into, what is notoriously known as, the 'Jagmohan Gameplan'. In hindsight, their fears of any annihilation in the wake of coming into being of a 'fundamentalist Islamic State' proved misplaced. A few thousand of them who stayed put in Kashmir were not harmed, save some highly suspicious incidents of mass killing that took place years after the migration of the Pandits from the Valley. Rekha Chowdhary observes:

It is important to note that most of these killings took place when the government was planning to rehabilitate the displaced Pandits back to the Valley. However, these massacres did not

go very well with the sensitivities of the Muslims and each time strong popular resentment against these killings was expressed in Kashmir.⁶⁴

The Sangrampora,⁶⁵ Wandhama⁶⁶ and Nadimarg⁶⁷ massacres are shrouded in mystery. In the Sangrampora case, one of the alleged perpetrators, Abu Haris alias Abu Khalid, was killed in an 'encounter' two days after the incident. The status of the investigation is 'untraced'. The executors of the Wandhama carnage are 'unknown' and the status of the investigation, again, is 'untraced'. In the Nadimarg massacre, the official version said that there were four assailants, of whom three were killed in different police encounters. The fourth accused, Zia Mustafa alias Abdullah from Pakistan, is undergoing trial. The counsel for the accused feels confident that the court will acquit Zia, as the "State has miserably failed to produce any witnesses against his client."⁶⁸ Sanjay Tikoo, President, Kashmiri Pandit Sangharsh Samiti (KPSS), an organization of the Valley-based Kashmiri Pandits, has challenged the Government version on the massacre. On the 13th anniversary of the Nadimarg massacre, Tikoo made some important observations that were carried by newspapers. The news report is reproduced here:

Justice has been eluding the survivors of Nadimarg massacre from past thirteen years. It was on the night of March 23, 2003 when unidentified armed men butchered 24 Kashmiri Pandits including 11 females and 2 toddlers. Nadimarg, a village in South Kashmir's Shopian district made headlines in 2003 after this gory massacre. Though authorities claimed that four armed men were responsible for the incident, among which three later on died in different encounters while the fourth one, a Pakistani militant Zia Mustafa was arrested and is languishing in Central Jail Srinagar. Advocate Mubashir Ahmed Ghutoo, the Counsel for Pakistani militant Zia Mustafa informed CNS that State has miserably failed to produce any witnesses against his client. He said that the trial has been over and Court was ready to pronounce its judgment, however, State moved to Supreme Court that directed High Court to reconsider the prayers of the State that wishes to re-examine the witnesses afresh. 'As a lawyer I can say that Court will acquit my client Mustafa Zia', he said. Activist Sanjay Tickoo who heads *Kashmir Sangharash Smiti* believes that

Nadimarg killers were 'experts and professionals' who might have been 24 in number. 'It is still a mystery who butchered the 24 Kashmiri Pandits in Nadimarg but after my visit there it became evident that killers were professional and they were not four in number', he said. 'Shortly after the massacre, I rushed to Nadimarg and applied in what Kashmiri is called 'sinder' (vermillion) on the faces of the victims to hide their bullet marks, before helping with the last rites. What I observed stunned me. The killers had pumped bullets from head to chin of the victims. Not a single bullet was fired upon the victims down the chin. This made it clear that killers were professional', he said adding that after killing the innocent people, 'the killers even barged into the houses and looted money and ornaments from there', Tickoo said adding that state failed to nab or identify the killers. Rahul Pandita, who has written a book, *Our Moon Has Blood Clots*, has quoted a lone Pandit survivor of the massacre as saying 'the terrorists were accompanied by some policemen who guided them towards our houses'. However, Sanjay Tickoo says that policemen were only three in number while rest had gone to meet their family members. 'When armed men entered into the village, policemen were busy playing cards and they were disarmed by the assailants. It is incorrect to say that policemen guided the assailants towards the houses of the Pandits', Sanjay Tickoo said.⁶⁹

Tikoo accuses the government of failing to arrest the accused in the Nadimarg massacre and making a Pakistani national a scapegoat in the incident with a cover of weak investigation and evidence.⁷⁰ Khuram Parvez, human rights activist and programme coordinator, Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society, says that the Nadimarg massacre victims "had chosen not to migrate in 1990 and had a very cordial relationship with local civilians and militants as well."⁷¹ He alleges that "few days before the massacre, some Kashmiri Pandit representatives had sought police protection for places like Nadimarg, which was refused by the then Director General of Police, A. K. Suri."⁷²

The arrest, trial and release of Farooq Ahmad Dar alias Bitta Karate also raises some questions. A Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) militant was accused of killing about two dozen Kashmiri Pandits and was tried in a special court handling cases under the Terrorist

and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA) Court. He was described as the ‘Ravana of Kashmir’ and the ‘Butcher of Pandits’, and spent 16 years in jail when the court on 23 October 2006 ordered his release, observing that Dar had been detained by an order under the PSA, which was earlier quashed by the Supreme Court of India. “The judge said in view of the fact that there was inordinate delay in framing of charges against the accused, he was forced to languish in jail for years together.”⁷³ Earlier, Dar had been presented as being instrumental in the exodus of Kashmiri Pandits from Kashmir for his alleged involvement in selectively eliminating about two dozen Pandits. However, neither the state government nor any Pandit organization moved the higher court against the release of Dar by the TADA Court. The Pandit organizations, it may be recalled, had condemned the release order as ‘sad reflection’ of the Jammu and Kashmir government’s “internal structures shielding the inhuman enemies of the nation.”⁷⁴

The failure of the government to nab culprits of the massacres of Kashmiri Pandits or take the matter to judicial conclusion has raised many questions. The KPSS holds both the Jammu and Kashmir Government and the Government of India responsible for not coming clean on these massacres as well as the state actors responsible for the carnages.⁷⁵ Amarjit Singh Dulat’s admission that “Indian intelligence agencies over the years often paid militants”⁷⁶ in Kashmir makes the picture muddier. Khuram Parvez describes massacres of minorities in Kashmir as occurrences following the creation of a counter-insurgency grid by the government. He points out:

Most of the massacres against minorities started taking place after 1996, when State forces had consolidated the counter insurgency mechanisms by the creation of Ikhwan—pro-government militia (1994), Special Task Force (1994), which later became Special Operations Group, Village Defence Committees (1995). The creation of these groups led to a deep militarized polarization and accelerated the new efforts of the Indian State’s dirty war in Jammu & Kashmir. A feature of violent incidents of this phase was the obfuscation of truth and culpability. Examples of such dirty war operations include the disappearance and murder of 5 foreign tourists in Pahalgam in 1995, which later was revealed as a secret operation of Indian agencies.⁷⁷

Over the years, several highly publicized killings blamed on armed militants have been subject of study and analyses. The findings of a research-based work on the abduction and disappearance of a group of foreign tourists in Kashmir throw an egg on the face of the government. On 4 July 1995, six Western tourists were kidnapped, allegedly by a militant outfit, Al-Faran, in the Lidderwat area of Pahalgam in South Kashmir. The victims included two British, two US, one German and one Norwegian citizen. While one US tourist, John Childs, managed to escape from captivity, the Norwegian, Hans Christian Ostro, was beheaded. The remaining four were never found. An in-depth research into the kidnapping and subsequent events by two journalists, Aldrian Levy and Cathy Scott-Clark, was published in a book entitled *The Meadow* in which the authors claim that

far from being utterly clueless, the security forces identify the hostages' exact location early on, but choose not to act simply to prolong adverse publicity for Pakistan, which is fingered as having backed the plot. They further allege that for the same reasons, a rogue Indian police unit then had the hostages killed.⁷⁸

Questions have also been raised about many other high profile killings like that of H. K. Khera, the then general manager, Hindustan Machine Tools (HMT), who was allegedly abducted and killed by militants in April 1990. Many people have pointed out contradictions in the official claim about the killing and wondered how amid strictest curfew the alleged killers could drive the abductee through the streets of Srinagar and gun him down near the Police Headquarters. Saadut, for one, has the following observation to make:

There has never been any explanation on how could these armed men have driven in a curfew seized Srinagar that was controlled by Indian paramilitary forces at every inch and then how was it possible for the killers to drive into and fire on Khera near the most heavily guarded and barricaded place [Jammu and Kashmir Police Headquarters] in Srinagar. Some questions in Kashmir have never been dared, for the fear of their known answers.⁷⁹

Nine years after the incident, TADA Court in Jammu on 20 April 2009 acquitted all the accused in the abduction and killing of Khera, Mushir-ul-Haq, then Vice Chancellor of Kashmir University and his Private Secretary, Abdul Gani Bhat. The court observed that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Indian federal investigating agency, had failed to produce sufficient evidence against them.⁸⁰ Curiously, Jagmohan had given a graphic account of Khera's abduction and killing and how the crime had been 'soon solved' by his government.⁸¹

Notwithstanding what led to the mass migration of Kashmiri Pandits, as they stepped outside the Valley an 'ordered chaos'⁸² was awaiting them at Jammu. With nowhere to go, the majority of them faced severe physical and psychological torments. They had moved in an environment that was both climatically and culturally not suited for them. From a life of ease to an existence as refugees in tents and cramped accommodations, their plight became pathetic. Large families had to adjust themselves in single rooms, affecting everyone especially the womenfolk who could not even dress up at ease. Absence of provisions for as small and routine things as attending to nature's call was highly taxing. Sharmishta, who lived a deprived life of a tented migrant, sums up the pathetic situation thus:

Attending nature's calls is no less than an ordeal here. The toilets are crowded and filthy. Men and boys can still find some open spaces to unburden themselves but we [females] have to wait and wait to manage even activities which are so normal.⁸³

The migration was harder on ruralite Pandits who were suddenly uprooted from their farms and orchards. In terms of qualifications for securing a livelihood, they were in a disadvantageous position compared with their urban brethren. Old men and women, particularly those who had never moved out of Kashmir, could not cope with displacement. Extreme hot weather, prolonged monsoon and frequent visits by poisonous reptiles in the camps made life difficult for the migrants. The taunts, harassments and insults coming from some unsympathetic people added to their plight. Young girls were subjected to stalking on almost daily basis. As if all of these were not

enough, the community faced an identity and cultural crisis. The culturally hostile environment that the Pandits found themselves in was summed up by a migrant in the following words:

We were not welcomed by Hindu Dogras our coreligionist in Jammu who felt that we will compete with them for jobs and business on the one hand, and on the other we never felt close to them culturally as we used to feel for Kashmiri Muslims.... The respect which Kashmiri Muslims used to give us was a distinct dream in Jammu.⁸⁴

Normally, Kashmiri Pandits would jealously guard their ethnicity and, what they call, their pure race. To retain their 'ethnic superiority', they would rarely marry their children outside the community fold and, even within community itself, sought marital tie-ups with identical *gotras*. The migration changed all this and marriages outside the community fold no longer remained an inhibition. Even the marriage ceremonies underwent changes and today, a feast served on a Kashmiri Pandit marriage looks more like Punjabi than one of a typical Kashmiri Pandit. Punjabi songs and Punjabi *rasoi* have slowly taken over the Pandit traditions. In the words of Priyanka Bhatt, "The whole idea of being a Kashmiri Pandit got lost. The children of Kashmiri Pandits (present generation) are completely lost; they have lost the inherited values, culture and ethnicity. The pure race of Kashmiri Pandits has lost due to intermingling [and] intercaste marriages."⁸⁵

As the majority of Kashmiri Pandit migrants faced adversity, their community leaders and organizations, chiefly Panun Kashmir, engaged in a campaign of slander against the Kashmiri Muslims. They were accused of uprooting the Pandits in hundreds of thousands, killing them in thousands and raping their women in hundreds. Anuradha Bhasin writes:

The last thirteen years interestingly saw the mushrooming of organisations professing to plead the cause of the Kashmiri Pandit migrants. Some of them like Panun Kashmir and All India Kashmiri Pandit Sabha had a wider reach up to the editorial desks in New Delhi, managing to hog limelight frequently even in the newspapers with wider circulation. And in due course of

time, with the electronic media beginning its news channel war, also managing some footage before the camera. With these key elitist leaders regularly chipping in with their sound bites on their ideology of 'ethnic cleansing' in the Valley and their perception of the woes of the migrants, the genuine migrant remained at the receiving end of injustice. Interestingly, the media also roped in Anupam Kher and Mahesh Bhatt [Hindi cinema actor and director, respectively of Kashmiri Pandit origin] to plead the cause of the migrants. Interestingly still, leave aside the superstars, even much of the Kashmiri Pandit leadership was not the recent settlers in Delhi. Most of them were neither migrants nor regular visitors to the Valley even prior to the days of militancy.⁸⁶

In the Pandit narratives, the number of migrants swelled to bizarre figures. People who espoused the cause, whether from the community or outside of it, quoted highly exaggerated statistics, varying from 350,000 to 700,000, as having migrated from Kashmir⁸⁷ in total disregard to their actual population. According to the Census of 1981, the total population of Hindus in Kashmir (including non-Kashmiris) was 124,078.⁸⁸ That accounts for 3.96 per cent of the total population (3,134,904) of Kashmir in 1981. Given the decadal growth of the community from 1971 to 1981 as 6.75 per cent,⁸⁹ their population in 1991 would have been 132,453. If we subtract about 8,000 members of the community who did not migrate from Kashmir,⁹⁰ the total number of Pandits who left the Valley in the wake of militancy is about 124,453. Contrast this number with the inflated figures, and the misinformation falls apart. Media reports of that period, however, put the figure of migrated Pandits at less than 100,000: *India Today* reported 90,000 Hindus having left the valley for Jammu or Delhi.⁹¹ An *Asia Watch Report* too carried this figure:

With government assistance a large part of the Hindu community in Kashmir, numbering perhaps 90,000, left the valley in 1989–90.⁹²

The precise number of Hindus who left is not known; press reports indicate that the number ranged from 50,000 to 90,000.⁹³

Based on the Census data and demographic figures, Alexander Evans estimates that 155,000–170,000 Pandits have left the Valley as migrants since the onset of violence in 1989.⁹⁴ As in the case of the number of Pandits migrating from Kashmir, figures of those killed in the Valley also varies. Compared to a little over 200 Pandits killed during the past 26 years, the number is projected as high as 3,000–4,000. Allegations of genocide, ethnic cleansing and wanton destruction of temples based on cooked-up figures became the stamp of the Pandit discourse. It gave birth to multiple Jonarajas who engaged themselves in distortion of facts. The Indian media amplified their stories without bothering to go into the facts about the total population of the community or the actual number of its members killed and migrated. Anuradha Bhasin sums up the situation thus:

Without studying the complexities of the basic issue, an anxious media willingly offered its columns in print on narratives of a Hindu minority ‘hounded’ out by the majority without questioning the ‘uniformity’ of the threat perception faced by the people round the Valley.... The national media jumped to conclusions. Eager reporters in an undying bid to be the first ones to file the story saw it as a consequence of an essentially Hindu–Muslim conflict. Most columnists got busy, whatever their bias, over-simplifying one of the most complicated phenomena of the Kashmir turmoil.⁹⁵

Over the years, lot of print, Internet and airwave space has been utilized to suggest that Kashmiri Pandits were killed in every nook and corner of the Valley before the community en masse ran off to safety. The media and the ‘academic discourse’ on Kashmir *ad infinitum* speak about ‘genocide’, ‘holocaust’ and ‘ethnic cleansing’ of Pandits in the Valley. ‘The Holocaust Day’ to highlight the ‘Genocide of Pandits’ in Kashmir is observed on 19 January. That these stories are believed by a large number of people in India is reflected through frequent media reports of harassment of Kashmiri Muslims across India. In the din of the allegations of ‘massacres and slaughter’, nobody seems to consider the fact that if the 90 per cent plus population of Kashmir was so hungry for the blood of a minuscule minority, why did there not occur a single incident

of stone pelting, leave alone murderous attacks, on the buses and vehicles ferrying Pandits for weeks on the 300 km long Srinagar-Jammu Highway. One might argue that the ‘Only Saviour of the Pandits’⁹⁶ had made enough security arrangements to ward off such an attack, but then that raises two important points. One, that the government facilitated, if not actually planned and executed, the Pandit migration and, two, it was capable of and could have, if it wanted, ensured security of the Pandits in Kashmir.

Another widely circulated story following the migration is that names of towns and historical places in Kashmir have been Islamized. The oft-repeated allegation, ever since it was first made, has not been substantiated with even a single instance. That, however, does not hold the leaders of Kashmiri Pandits back from repeating the allegation over and over again. The allegation was repeated before the Indian Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs in July 2013.⁹⁷ Historically, the majority community of Kashmir has never attempted to tamper with the symbols of the minority community, not even of their worst Hindu rulers. They have large-heartedly tolerated amidst them the *samadhis* of their tormentors. Places such as Maharajgunj, Ram Munshi Bagh, Shivpora, Jawahar Nagar, Indira Nagar, Karan Nagar, Devi Aangan, Bhan Mohallah, Vitchar Nag, Jogi Wan, Razdan Kocha, Dwarki Kocha, Wazir Bagh, Dhar Bagh, Shri Bhat, Batyar, Rampur, Mandir Bagh, Ram Bagh, Ganpatyar, Durga Nag, Sheetal Nath, Jogi Lankar, Gupt Ganga, Tulsi Bagh, Shankar Pora (all in Srinagar district), Malakh Nag, Luke Bhawan, Prane Bhawan, Ganesh Bal, Sangam, Sri Gofwara, Devipora (in Anantnag district), Batapora, Reshi Nagar, Harmain, Jam Nagar, Awanti Pora, Inder, Tritchhal (in Shopian and Pulwama districts) Sangrampora, Rampora, Singhpora, Jogi Ghat, Batapora, Rajghat, Ramghat, Amargarh, Devi Bal, Gosain Teng, Bhairav Bagh (Baramulla district), Ompora (Badgam district), Narayan Bagh (Ganderbal district), Bhadrkali (Kupwara district) to mention only a few are still known by these names. Neither have Sri Pratap College, Amar Singh College, Sri Pratap Higher Secondary School, Sri Pratap Museum, Hari Singh High Street, Shri Maharaja Hari Singh Hospital—named after the worst rulers the Kashmiri Muslims have suffered—undergone any name change. The fact remains that

post-Pandit migration, the name of not a single place or a Hindu symbol in Kashmir has been ‘changed into [the] Islamic lexicon’.

Those who allege that names of places in Kashmir have been Islamized often, and only, quote the instance of Islamabad, a South Kashmir town which they claim was originally named Anantnag. History, however, does not corroborate this assertion. The town bears the name of Islamabad since it was founded during the Mughal rule over Kashmir. During the reign of Aurangzeb (1658–1707 AD), one of his governors, Islam Khan, laid out a garden here for the king who named the place as Islamabad after the governor.⁹⁸ The town was rechristened as Anantnag during the Dogra rule (1846–1947 AD). There is no historical evidence supporting the assumption that the town with its name as Anantnag existed in ancient Kashmir. The *Rajatarangini* does not mention any shrine or place with this name, nor do texts preceding it. Stein who minutely studied ancient texts like the *Nilamata* and the *mahatmyas* while translating and writing annotations on the *Rajatarangini*, finds in them no *tirtha* by the name of Anantnag, the supposed shrine after which the town was said to have gotten its name. “Of the town, however,” he writes, “I cannot find any old notice, and it is in all probability, as its Mohammadan name implies, a later foundation.”⁹⁹

Over the years, complete silence maintained by the government on and its wilful failure to counter the hyperbole fed propaganda factories. It left the ground open for the interested groups to cook and serve falsehood and present Muslims of Kashmir as the villains of humanity. However, 20 years down the lane, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir came out with some facts that called the bluff on the actual number of Kashmiri Pandits killed in and migrated from Kashmir. On 23 March 2010, it admitted on the floor of the State Legislative Assembly that 219 Kashmiri Hindus were killed by militants since 1989.¹⁰⁰ A year later, the Government of India, through a statement made in the Parliament by the Minister of State for Home, confirmed the figure.¹⁰¹ As can be seen from official figures, the number of Kashmiri Pandits killed in violence is minuscule (0.5 per cent) compared to the casualties (99.5 per cent) suffered by Muslims. According to official figures issued in 2011, militants had killed 13,226 civilians¹⁰² since 1990. Who are these

over 13,000 Kashmiris? They are Muslims allegedly killed by armed militants for being ‘anti-movement’ or by counter-insurgents for being ‘pro-militancy’. “These 13,226 Kashmiris just do not exist in the collective psyche. There are no websites to them, no petitions and no organizations to keep alive their memory.”¹⁰³ Yet the right wing Pandit narratives would not look at the killing of civilians in Kashmir beyond the blood spill of Hindus. Clearly, the figures made public by the two governments did not stop the propaganda mills from churning out the ‘genocide’ tales.

The exaggerated figures about the Pandits dying in Kashmir violence have embarrassed even some of the community members themselves. Film actor Rahul Bhat believes that Muslims suffered more than Pandits in the Valley during the last 25 years of turmoil. Bhat observes:

I must admit that Muslims in Kashmir suffered heavily than Kashmiri Pandits. They suffered all these years more than any community in the state did.¹⁰⁴

Sanjay Tikoo asserts that 399 members of their community were killed in the Valley in a span of 20 years. Tikoo rejects as propaganda the claim of Panun Kashmir that 3,000–4,000 Pandits were killed.¹⁰⁵ Even Tikoo’s estimate of casualties is contested by some fellow Kashmiri Pandits who like him did not migrate from the Valley. Motilal Bhat observes:

I think the government’s figures [219] are correct...I reject this figure of 650 [and] even the figure 399.¹⁰⁶

Besides quoting inflated figures about the number of Pandits who migrated from or were killed in Kashmir, the ‘persecution narrative’ drew its force from some very gruesome incidents that never happened or did not happen in the manner these are highlighted. A Kashmiri Pandit girl, Sarla Bhat, resident of Anantnag and working as a nurse in the Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences, Soura, was allegedly abducted on 19 April 1990, gang-raped for many days, killed and her body abandoned on the roadside.¹⁰⁷ The scene of the alleged crime was reported as Hazratbal in Srinagar. In response to a query asked

through an RTI application addressed to the State Home Department, the Srinagar Police denies the incident having taken place.¹⁰⁸ To a question whether this incident took place, the police responded with an emphatic ‘No’. Likewise, another occurrence of “abduction, torture, gang-rape, killing and body with broken limbs abandoned on the road” of Mrs M. N. Paul on 17 March 1990 at Takoora¹⁰⁹ [Zakoora] is also denied by the police.¹¹⁰ The police also deny the incident of alleged kidnapping of a 12-year-old Shaloo Basanti, along with her father Vijay Chand, from Zainakote in Srinagar on 22 October 1992.¹¹¹ In another case of alleged abduction, gang rape, torture and killing of Asha Koul,¹¹² a resident of Acchabal, Anantnag, the police confirms that her decomposed body was recovered at Shella Kadal, Srinagar, and “cause of her death could not be ascertained.”¹¹³ The police response states:

Nothing in the case can be clearly said as the lady was actually R/O [resident of] Achabal Anantnag but her decomposed D/B [dead body] was recovered at Shella Kadal Sgr [Srinagar] and [the] cause of her death could not be ascertained.

Another widely circulated horrible murder was of Girja Tikoo, laboratory assistant at the Government Girls High School, Trehgam, in north Kashmir district of Kupwara, who was allegedly “abducted, gang-raped, killed and the body cut into pieces at a sawmill on 6 April 1990” (one website gives the date as 6 June 1990).¹¹⁴ The incident was highlighted in the year 2000 by Vijay K. Sazawal in his testimony before the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) during its hearings on religious freedom in India and Pakistan.¹¹⁵ It also forms part of the online literature on the Pandit community’s websites. The village headman, Ghulam Nabi, confirms that the lady, hailing from Tikker village (not Trehgam) in Kupwara district, was abducted from Chopan Mohalla, sexually violated and killed. Her body was recovered from Kahmil stream. The allegation that it was cut into pieces on a sawmill is a deliberate twist to an unfortunate and horrible incident. Two other cases of murder relate to the killing of Rupawati Bhan and Babli Bhan, respectively wife and daughter-in-law of Dwarika Nath Bhan of Drusso, Pulwama, who

were allegedly tortured to death and their bodies were “flung from the third storey onto the road.”¹¹⁶ The police confirms the tragic killing of the two ladies, but the incident of flinging their bodies from the third storey onto the road did not take place. The police report about the incident reads:

On 28-06-1990, at 2200 hours, unknown militant entered into the house of Dwarika Nath Bhan S/O Tara Chand Bhan R/O Drusso and fired indiscriminately upon his wife namely Rupawati and his daughter-in-law namely Babli Bhan, killed them on spot and fled away.¹¹⁷

One of the websites, chronicling ‘atrocities’ on Kashmiri Pandits, reports that “15 [Kashmiri] Pandits who had gone to graze their livestock were murdered” in Jammu in July 2001.¹¹⁸ Besides the exact date and place of the alleged occurrence, the narrator of the story conveniently ignores the fact that Kashmiri Pandits have never ever in history, not at least since the 14th century, been known to be associated with grazing of cattle, a profession considered by them below the dignity for their superior race. Likewise, the fact sheet of atrocities on Kashmiri Pandits put up by the Kashmiri Overseas Association on its website gives the number of burnt houses of the community members as “more than 20,000” and “torture killings of the Kashmiri Pandits in the Valley” as “more than 1,100.”¹¹⁹ Number of educational institutions of the community allegedly burnt, damaged or forcibly occupied is given as 105. The strategies, the website claims, the terrorists used against the Hindus in Kashmir include “appropriation of their property and its attachment to Muslim religious endowment.” Of the then total six districts of Kashmir, Srinagar, where almost half of the total Hindu population lived before the Pandit migration (59,449 out of total 124,078, Census 1981), is perhaps the right instance to examine the above quoted statistics. According to official figures, during the militancy, 556 houses belonging to Kashmiri Pandits were burnt in the district. Only one educational institution of the community was burnt, damaged or forcibly occupied. The allegation of appropriation of property of Pandits and its attachment to Muslim religious endowments is atrocious, to say the least.

Following the Pandit migration, stories started circulating that large-scale destruction and desecration of temples in Kashmir was done by Muslims in general and armed groups in particular. The media picked and amplified these allegations. The right wing Hindu organizations in India created public outcry about the issue. The BJP came out with a long list of the ‘destructed temples’. The senior party leader, Lal Krishna Advani, who later spearheaded the ‘Ram Janambhoomi’ campaign that resulted in daylight destruction of the 16th-century Babri Mosque¹²⁰ at Ayodhya in North India on 6 December 1992 used this as a counter-attack weapon to silence the critics of the mosque destruction. “All political parties which think it is their duty to defend the [Babri] mosque, not one of them has spoken a word of criticism about the 55 temples broken in Kashmir. No one talks about it,”¹²¹ said Advani in February 1991, 10 months before the pulling down of the mosque by thousands of fanatic Hindus in his presence. Different party leaders, however, gave different number of ‘destructed temples’, even Advani, a few days after the Babri Mosque was levelled, scaled down the figure from 55 to 40. “None raised a voice when 40-odd temples were desecrated in Kashmir. Why these double standards?” he asked.¹²²

Those who were vociferous in alleging large-scale destruction of temples were not only unsure about their numbers but equally uncertain whether these temples were brought down or damaged before or after the eruption of militancy in Kashmir.

Obtaining a precise list from the BJP of the ‘damaged’ temples was an uphill task. While the BJP General Secretary Kedarnath Sahni alleged that hundreds of temples were destroyed in Kashmir and produced a list of the temples that he said were damaged in 1986, Vice-President K. R. Malkani insisted that when they spoke of broken temples they meant shrines damaged by ‘Muslim fundamentalists’ after 1989.¹²³

Journalist Harinder Baweja, who did an insightful story, “Damaging Lie,” for the *India Today* on allegations of temple destruction, writes:

No one in the BJP, however, was able even to give the number of temples damaged. While Sahni said ‘hundreds have been

destroyed," Advani has over the past three years said 55 at one point and 40 at another. While the BJP's central office gave a list of 46 temples said to have been damaged in 1986, its Jammu office furnished a list of 82 temples. Two years ago, a senior RSS leader gave a list to journalist B. G. Verghese of 62 temples which were burnt and damaged in Kashmir by terrorists in 1990.¹²⁴

Baweja's investigation, backed by photographic evidence, dismantles the temple destruction bogey and reveals that

the BJP and its leaders have either been misled on this issue or were deliberately using the tactic of the Big Lie (if you repeat a gross untruth often enough, people begin to believe you) in order to score political points. That the BJP was unsure of its facts became evident even before *India Today*'s investigating team reached Kashmir to find out the facts.¹²⁵

Baweja further observes:

The confusion about the dates and the lists of temples destroyed raised doubts about the BJP's credibility on this issue. But even that paled into insignificance after *India Today* visited 23 temples—the names of which had been provided by the BJP itself. According to the list all of these had either been burnt, damaged or desecrated.

The ground reality is that except for two temples—Shailputri and Bhairav temple[s] in Baramulla—the rest are still entirely safe. The more important ones, like the famous Khir Bhawani temple at Tula Mulla village in Ganderbal, 30 miles from Srinagar, or the Dashnami Akhara, located at Srinagar's Badshah Chowk from where the annual yatra to the Amarnath Cave starts, are also safe even though the BJP would have you believe that they are 'completely burnt'. Neither is the Akhara gutted nor was Khir Bhawani damaged by rocket attacks.¹²⁶

The *India Today* quoted Mohan Pai, the pujari of the Ganpatyar Temple, one of the allegedly destructed temples, as asserting, "Puja had continued uninterrupted in this 200-year-old Hanuman temple." It also refers to smaller temples, "situated in villages which abound

with militants,” not being harmed right through the 1989–91 period when militancy was at its peak. Baweja further writes:

And though Pandit families have migrated, even in villages which are left with only one or two Pandit homes, the temples are safe. The Pandit families have actually become custodians of the temples. They are encouraged by their Muslim neighbours to regularly offer prayers. In Dayalgam, for instance, a small village in District Anantnag, Maheshwar Nath's is the only Pandit family. 'Gita ki kasam, this temple has never been touched', Nath said as he opened the temple to show that it was undamaged.¹²⁷

When Advani was asked about what his party's stand would be if someone were to find that the BJP was lying and distorting the facts, he replied:

I don't have a list nor do I know the exact number, which is why I always say 'scores of temples'. In some statements, I have given a figure of 40 but the number is not important. If it isn't 40, it'll be 38 or 39.¹²⁸

The number of so-called destructed temples suddenly lost importance for him. Baweja gives a list of several temples that were alleged to have been burnt down, desecrated or damaged. The *India Today* team found them safe. These include Dashnami Akhara, Srinagar; Ganpatyar Temple, Srinagar; Shiv Temple, Jawahar Nagar; Hanuman Mandir, Srinagar; Hanuman Temple, Barbarshah, Srinagar; Jal Devi Temple, Bijbehara; Vijeshwar Temple, Bijbehara; Shiv Temple, Bijbehara; Ragunath Temple, Anantnag; Gurtumnag Temple, Anantnag; Dayalgam Temple, Anantnag; Rupa Bhawani Mandir, Wakura, Ganderbal; Khir Bhawani Temple and Shiv Temple, Ganderbal. Baweja writes about damages caused to several religious structures, both mosques and temples:

By cross-firing and other militant-related activity and not because there was any concerned attempt at targeting temples.... If temples were to be singled out, they could easily have been attacked in village after village. In many places such as Lukh Bhawan in Anantnag, it is the Muslims who feed the fish in the pond around which stand three temples.¹²⁹

After tearing temple destruction allegations into shreds, Baweja concludes the story with a significant two-sentence observation:

Visits to temple after temple proved that it was not the temples but the BJP's propaganda which needed to be demolished. The Big Lie can fool some of the people some of the time but not all of the people all of the time.¹³⁰

Besides the *India Today* story nailing the temple destruction lies, a committee of the Press Council of India, which also looked into these allegations, found these as part of a disinformation campaign. The Committee observes:

'Much disinformation is being spread in Jammu and Delhi that scores or hundreds of Hindu temples and the shrines have been desecrated or destroyed in Kashmir. This is completely untrue and it is baffling that the government has not thought fit to ask Doordarshan to do a programme on *mandirs* in Kashmir just to reassure people that they remain unharmed.'¹³¹ On the contrary, 'while there is evidence to the effect that many Muslims took pains to guard the houses left vacant by their neighbouring Kashmiri Pandits, such information was rarely reported.'¹³²

An instance representative of the absurdity of the propaganda of temple destruction in Kashmir is the Hanuman Temple on the banks of the River Jhelum at the Hari Singh High Street in Srinagar. Before militancy erupted in Kashmir, there was only one temple constructed by the Dogra ruler, Pratap Singh. Two more temples came up in the same complex post-1989, and today three temples stand here adjacent to one another. Other numerous temples erected by army and paramilitary forces in cities and countryside within and outside their campsites, during the turmoil in Kashmir, are not counted. It is highly probable that the total number of temples across Kashmir has increased since 1990.

As the majority community of Kashmir was being demonized throughout India for alleged destruction of a large number of temples, a Muslim duo in south Kashmir's Pahalgam hit the propaganda bull in the eye. At the time of migration in 1989, Pandit Radha Krishna, caretaker of the Mamleshwar temple, handed over the keys of the

900-year old Shiva temple to a Muslim who took care of the shrine and kept it open till his transfer from the area in 2004. Thereafter, Mohammad Abdullah and Ghulam Hassan maintained the temple and arranged *aarti* every day, besides ensuring safety of the 3-feet-long black stone *Shiva lingam*. Abdullah and Hassan felt that they had fulfilled their task of guarding the shrine for Kashmiri Pandits and wished the migrants return and take back the control of the temple. In the meanwhile, they ensured that no devotee went without *prasad* even for a single day.¹³³

The ancient Payar Temple in the south Kashmir district of Pulwama too is looked after by a Muslim family. Mushtaq Ahmad is the official caretaker of the ASI, protected temple since 2013. Earlier, his cousin, Ghulam Nabi Sheikh worked as the sole caretaker of the temple for almost four decades. The villagers have protected the ancient monument in times of civil unrest like in 2010. Tariq Ahmad Khan, a teacher at local school in Payar village, reveals the secret behind the Shiva temple surviving so long in a perceived anti-Hindu surrounding:

[On] the advent of Islam in Kashmir around eight hundred years ago our forefathers converted to Islam from Hinduism. The temple would have not survived had they thought to dismantle it.¹³⁴

Amid sustained efforts by adversaries to paint the majority community of Kashmir as communal and intolerant, local Muslims in Rainawari, a congested pocket of Srinagar city, not only frustrated the efforts of the Hindu caretaker of Vitaal Bhairav temple to sell the shrine land to a businessman but also renovated the reportedly 400-year old temple.¹³⁵ They got a whiff of this clandestine deal, raised an alarm and, with Srinagar-based Kashmiri Pandits, upset the imminent sale deal. They engaged skilled workers and labourers to repair the temple and members of the two communities formed Rainawari Action Forum to protect temples in the area.

In village Yechgam of central Kashmir's Budgam district, Muslims set a shining example of religious tolerance. The village had no temples for the Kashmiri Pandit families who did not leave their homes following the eruption of violence in 1989. Local Muslims rose to the occasion and donated land for building a temple, besides actively

participating in its construction. Protection of a temple by Muslims in downtown Srinagar was also witnessed during the flood of 2014. Members of the majority community collected sandbags and put these around the temple to save it from inundation. Rajni Shaleen Chopra reports the incident thus:

The temple is not a standalone structure. It is flanked on both sides by houses of Kashmiri Muslims, who chose to protect the temple because of the sentiment.... Those who have some understanding of Kashmir and Kashmriyat know that the sandbags were not placed at the temple for some photo-op. Nor were they placed by the Army or the security agencies. The protection measures were taken by ordinary Kashmiris simply because they consider the temple a house of God, which should be protected.¹³⁶

During the devastating flood of September 2014, when most of the Srinagar city habitations were drowned under 10–15 feet high water, the majority community exhibited exemplary feelings of brotherhood by rescuing Kashmiri Pandit families. At Wazirbagh in uptown Srinagar, flood waters were rising by a few feet every hour. The family of Ashokji was among the first to be rescued by local Muslims, Sohail Tabrez and Akil. The sprawling 3-storied house of Ashokji was looked afterwards by two Muslim teenagers, who, along with their friends, took over a dozen trips a day to the house on a boat.¹³⁷ In another instance of fellow feeling, the *mahant* of Dashnami Akhara near Maisuma in the city centre, along with several other Hindus, had taken refuge in the upper storey of the nearby Sanatan Dharma Inn, known as the Yatri Niwas, and were held up there without food. The area was submerged under 10 feet of water. In their hour of distress, the trapped people were fed by Muslim youth volunteers who reached them with food items carried in boats. The *mahant* publicly expressed gratitude to these saviours for their help without which he said he would not have survived. Strangely, instead of highlighting this brave effort, a section of the Indian ‘mainstream media’ accused the youth of stealing the boat. Unfortunately, this section of mainstream Indian media, especially the electronic media, portrays the children on the streets in Srinagar as terrorists.¹³⁸

Since the mainstream Indian print and electronic media is heavily tilted against Kashmir and its majority community, positive stories from the Valley are seldom reported even as an insignificant adverse news report receives extra ordinary treatment at the desk. As a result, facts received severe beating at the hands of the media. Senior journalist Shekhar Gupta observes:

You have to be a brave and particularly patriotic Indian to explore if the other side, in this case the indigenous Kashmiri, also has a storyline, a point of view or, to flog that much misused word these days, narrative.¹³⁹

The real picture as against the allegations of widespread destruction of temples in Kashmir or the larger migration narrative is never disseminated.

For years, the alleged destruction of temples and encroachment of their land in Kashmir has been used by the right wing Hindu forces to whip passions across India and garner support for their communal politics. However, the Jammu and Kashmir Government came up, albeit very late, with facts according to which there are 448 temples across Kashmir with nearly 1,700 kanal land and no instance in which the land was occupied. The figures were given out in reply to a question by lawmaker Vijay Bakaya in the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Council who later admitted to have been aware of the fact and asked the question “just to reassure myself.”¹⁴⁰ Far from local Muslims destroying temples or occupying temple properties in Kashmir, it were the non-Kashmiri Hindu priests who came from different Indian states after the Pandit migration, took control of temples and, in many cases, sold their endowment properties to businessmen. An in-depth story done by the *Kashmir Life* reveals:

By the time the situation improved, most of the temples had been taken over by the priests from outside. They did not only change the system and the language of the prayers; in certain cases they started selling parts of various properties that temples owned.¹⁴¹

The newspaper reports one of the glaring instances of this loot from the capital city of Srinagar thus:

Take the case of Sathu Barbarshah in the heart of Srinagar where three Pujaris—Gopal Dass, Ram Dass and Jairam Dass from UP and Bihar functioned as caretakers of a temple since 1988 that owned 375 kanal land across Kashmir. The caretakers allegedly leased vast stretches of land to Delhi and local residents in violation of the Article 370. It, in turn, was sold out for millions [of rupees]. Kuldeep Narayan Jaggi, one lease holder set up a shopping complex that fetched him Rs 2.50 crore. Even an ancient idol of the temple is missing. Tikoo says there are many such instances and their estimates suggest that assets worth Rs 500 crore are already sold out.¹⁴²

The mass media today yields enormous power. If a section of a community with considerable influence over the media disseminates falsehood, in a country of the size of India and with an enormous media network such as it has, there is nothing to help facts come out clearly. A considerable section of the Indian media, as a matter of fact, has always twisted facts about Kashmir. It helps in creation and hype of a negative image of the Muslims of Kashmir. For several years, unprecedented hate against them is observed, flowing through the media and social networking sites. One of the consequences of this onslaught is that space for Kashmiri Muslims in Indian states is squeezing by the day with harassment and vindictive actions against them at the hands of police and individual Hindu groups coming to the fore every now and then.

Another misinformation serving as the cornerstone of the dominant Pandit Narrative during the last two decades is that 300,000–700,000 Kashmiri Hindus migrated from the Valley following the onset of militancy. The figure is unquestioningly subscribed to by the right wing Indian Hindus even as the propaganda strangulates the demography of Kashmir. There never ever lived as many Pandits in Kashmir since the 14th century AD when Kashmiris embraced Islam *en masse*. Anuradha Bhasin makes the following observation:

The figures of genuine migrants have often been disputed. Jammu and Kashmir government in the mid-nineties began probing the cases of ‘fake’ migrants and names of several people, known to have migrated much before militancy, receiving relief were struck off from the list. The Panun Kashmir would love to

quote the displacements at 3.5 to 4 lakh (one lakh = 100,000) persons. In Jammu, which is home to largest number of Kashmiri migrants, only an estimated 59,000 are registered till date.¹⁴³

The Government, belatedly enough, came out with figures according to which 38,119 Pandit families had migrated from Kashmir and 142,042 community members were registered as migrants.¹⁴⁴ If each family was comprised of four members (which is a realistic figure given the fact that Kashmiri Pandits are known to have small families), the total number of migrants as 142,042 could be easily assumed to be correct.¹⁴⁵ Incidentally, 10,930 Muslims and 7,113 Sikhs¹⁴⁶ were also known to have migrated from Kashmir in the wake of violence, but one hardly found any mention about them in the migration narrative.

Now, a word about the ‘ethnic cleansing’. The term is being used very frequently to compare the plight of Kashmiri Pandits with that of the Jews at the hands of the Nazis during the World War II. Those who use this term in the context of Kashmir, obviously have no regard for exactitude in the use of lexicon. That in an ethnic cleansing the perpetrator community would not suffer more fatalities than the victim community seems of no consequence to the ethnic cleansing theorists. If we go by official figures only, the ratio of casualties is about 45,000 against 219. The civil society groups, however, put the civilian deaths at about 100,000.

A systematic campaign has been going on outside the Valley to demonize Kashmiri Muslims and holding them responsible for the plight of the Pandits. A representative of this misinformation is the book titled *Our Moon Has Blood Clots: The Exodus of the Kashmiri Pandits*. The author squarely blames Muslims for, what he wants his readers to believe, getting rid of the Pandits to establish an Independent Islamic State in Kashmir. The book presents Kashmiri Muslims as bloodthirsty hordes swooping on the Pandit houses, killing inmates and raping women. It has created distaste among the sensible elements even within the author’s own community for its unsubstantiated and imaginary account of events.¹⁴⁷

Twenty-two years—of sustained propaganda against and persecution of Kashmiri Muslims—later, a testimony coming from within the

'victim community' itself has torn into shreds the allegations against the Muslims of Kashmir. In October 2012, the Hindu Welfare Society of Kashmir, an organization of Kashmiri Pandits who stayed put in the Valley against all odds and were sneered at by their migrated co-religionists, absolved Kashmiri Muslims of the responsibility of the 'Pandit exodus'. Importantly, it also demanded probe into the much-hyped mass killings of Kashmiri Pandits at Wandhama and Nadimarg.¹⁴⁸ Like Chattisinghpura in South Kashmir where, in March 2000, as many as 36 Sikhs were slaughtered in the most gruesome yet suspicious manner, the perpetrators of the two carnages were claimed by the government to have been eliminated within days. In the case of Chattisinghpura, five villagers were gunned down by the army and state police personnel at Pathribal in South Kashmir and their bodies presented as of those "terrorists" responsible for the massacre of the Sikhs. The then Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister of India, Lal Krishna Advani, came all the way from Delhi to Chattisinghpura to compliment the soldiers and policemen and posed for a photograph with them and their officers as a gesture of encouragement for eliminating the 'killers' within days. Years later, the CBI charge-sheeted five army officials, including a Brigadier, for the cold-blooded murder of five innocent villagers.

As the story of Kashmir is being narrated, facts suffer the worst. The past seven decades, especially the last two during which the people of the Valley rose *en masse* against Indian control of the territory, saw the worst form of discourse on Kashmir taking place in media and on the Internet. The focus of this discourse has remained on distorting facts and projecting the sinned against as the sinners. Outright murders are passed off as militancy-related casualties; daylight rapes denied or described as consensual sex and suspicious killings placed at the door of the residents of the neighbourhood.

The adverse publicity surrounding Kashmir during the past two decades had both its bad and good consequences. On the bad side, it projected an entirely distorted picture of Kashmir and its people and politics. On the good side, it generated a lot of interest, especially among the young generation in Kashmir, to do a serious reading of their own history and write about it as well. The youth have created

a new opportunity to record Kashmir's history as it unfolds. They have taken up writing books as a serious engagement and a means to fight distortion. Books, such as *Curfewed Night* by Basharat Peer, *The Collaborator* and *Book of Golden Leaves* by Mirza Waheed, *Until My Freedom Has Come* and *Of Occupation and Resistance: Writings from Kashmir*, anthologies edited by Sanjay Kak and Fahad Shah, respectively, are some serious literary initiatives to tell the world the real story of Kashmir. Agha Shahid Ali's *The Country Without a Post Office*, Iftikhar Gilani's *My Days in Prison*, Shafi Ahmad's *The Half Widow* and *The Ghost Town*, Shahnaz Bashir's *The Half Mother*, Zamrooda Habib's *Qaidi Number 100*, Rumana Makhdoomi's *White Man in Dark*, Ghulam Nabi Shahid's *Elan Jaari Hai* and Zahir-ud-Din's *Did They Vanish in Thin Air?* are other representative works of the post-1990 Kashmir, highlighting the pain and tribulation of its people.

This [post 1990 scenario] is the immediate historical backdrop against which the writings of our new writers are set as they endeavor to explore these realities by reflecting the perspectives of the people who face oppression from all sides. These new narratives can be seen as historiographies which sensitively bring to fore many unknown or unexpressed dimensions of the Kashmir conflict, thereby drawing attention to a long-neglected human story. In doing so, these writings represent a stream of writing which has grown out of the realities of armed struggle and conflict. Though the texts, under mention, grow out of a specific and critical historical reality, they convey a multiplicity of versions and facets that armed conflict in Kashmir has stimulated.¹⁴⁹

Five young Kashmiri women aged between 22 and 26 have come up with a book, *Do You Remember Kunan Poshpora?* about the gruesome incident of mass rape of several dozen Muslim women of all ages allegedly by the army on 23 February 1991 in the twin villages of Kunan and Poshpora in North Kashmir's district of Kupwara.¹⁵⁰ There is a whole crop of young Kashmiris who write with passion and clarity about Kashmir and the conditions its people suffer. These include students, researchers and filmmakers, some of whom are based in the

US.¹⁵¹ There are others who actively engage on social media in fighting falsehoods surrounding Kashmir. Importantly, some Kashmiri Pandits, including Mona Bhan, Dipti Misri, Nitasha Koul and Sanjay Kak, breaking away from the community narrative, are writing about Kashmir in an objective and conscientious manner.

Many writers and commentators have alluded to the traditional bonhomie between Kashmiri Muslims and Kashmiri Pandits existing before 1989. However, what they miss is that this bonhomie existed irrespective of the fact that historically Kashmiri Pandits have never aligned themselves with the majority community on political issues that seriously concerned or bothered their Muslim compatriots. Whether it was the fight against occupation of Kashmir by the Mughals, the Afghans, the Sikhs or the Dogras, or the struggle for the right to the promised self-determination, Kashmiri Pandits always took a position opposite to the majority sentiment. This posturing went beyond the political dimension of the Kashmir issue where post-1947 they have always been unquestioningly supportive of the Indian point of view. Taking a stand on the issues contrary to the feelings of the majority community is pursued by them with conviction. They refuse to join their Muslim compatriots even on economic issues that concerned both the communities. Hence, it were only Muslims who fell to police bullets for agitating against sudden rise in electricity tariff or withdrawal of food subsidy and the Pandits had no reservations in sharing the fruits of the blood that Muslim agitators shed on the streets of Kashmir on these issues. The majority community of Kashmir recalls with disappointment that not a single statement of condemnation or a word of sympathy has ever come from the Pandit community on incidents, of which there are numerous and many admitted officially, of killing of innocent Kashmiri Muslims since the onset of militancy.¹⁵² For several years now, the majority population has been demanding repeal of AFSPA¹⁵³ from Kashmir where it was imposed in 1990 following the outbreak of the armed struggle against Indian rule. The Act has been grossly misused and, apart from civil society and pro-freedom organizations in Kashmir, the state government as well as the principal opposition party in the state legislature too have been asking the Government of India to withdraw it. Human rights organizations, both Indian and international, have described

the Act as draconian and demanded its revocation. In the words of Christof Heyns:

The AFSPA in effect allows the state to override rights in the disturbed areas in a much [more] intrusive way than would be the case under a state of emergency, since the right to life is in effect suspended, and this is done without the safeguards applicable to states of emergency.¹⁵⁴

There is widespread demand for the AFSPA to go from Kashmir. However, the Kashmiri Pandits pursue with the Government of India the continuance of the Act even as it is universally described as running against the soul and spirit of democracy. The Pandit organizations of different denominations have staged protest demonstration in different parts of India and other countries to scuttle any move that might lead to the revocation of the Act. They also met the Indian Defence Minister asking him not to withdraw the Act.¹⁵⁵ During the two major civil unrests in Kashmir in 2008 and 2010, when Kashmir and Jammu were pitted against each other and the Srinagar–Jammu Highway was blocked by Hindu extremists in Jammu to enforce an economic blockade of Kashmir, the majority of them, according to intelligence reports, were young Kashmiri Pandit boys.¹⁵⁶

Notes and References

1. Jattu addressed a press conference at Srinagar. Senior journalists, Yusuf Jameel and Mukhtar Ahmad, who reported the press conference for *The Telegraph*, Calcutta and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the *Daily Excelsior*, Jammu respectively recall that Jattu threatened migration of “all 150,000 Kashmiri Pandits living in the valley if, what he alleged, the youth of the community were continued to be discriminated against in matters of government jobs and the situation was not changed for the better.”
2. Representation of the Sanatan Dharama Youngmen’s Association, Srinagar against the Glancy Commission Report, File No. 215/149-P.S., Year 1932, State Archives Repository, Jammu.
3. H. N. Jattu, *Kashmir Times*, 8 September 1988. As an aside, Jattu praised Muslims of Kashmir and said that “despite extreme provocations by a handful of elements majority of the Muslims demonstrated exemplary sense of responsibility and saved the minority community and their places of worship.”

4. Ibid.
5. As told to the author in an interview on 30 January 2016.
6. Dr Mohammad Shafi in an interview with the author on 15 September 2010.
7. Indian Government's response to the uprising was brutal, which took a heavy toll of civilian life, property and human rights. The revenge killings and burning down of neighbourhoods were labelled as actions in self-defence or collateral damage. Over the years, series of massacres of unarmed civilians took place and decades down the lane, no army or paramilitary trooper is known to have been brought to justice. The massacres include Gowkadal (55 killed on 20 January 1990; [Kashmir's First Blood, *Indian Express*, 1 May 2005]), Alamgari Bazar (10 killed on 22 January 1990; [Kashmir witnessed 30 massacres: JKCCS, <http://www.kashmirglobal.com/2012/10/15/kashmir-witnessed-30-massacres-jkccs.html>]), Handwara (26 killed on 25 January 1990, [<http://www.kashmirglobal.com/2011/02/20/25-handwara-men-fell-to-bullets-protesting-gaw-kadal-srinagar-massacre.html>]), Zakura and Tengpora Bypass (33 killed on 1 March 1990; Gossman, "Human Rights in India: Kashmir Under Seige," 59–60]), Islamia College, Hawal (50 killed on 1 May 1990; [Greater Kashmir, 22 April 2013]), Naaz Cinema (10 killed on 19 January 1991; [Kashmir witnessed 30 massacres: JKCCS, <http://www.kashmirglobal.com/2012/10/15/kashmir-witnessed-30-massacres-jkccs.html>]), Khanyar (19 killed on 8 May 1991; [Kashmir witnessed 30 massacres: JKCCS, <http://www.kashmirglobal.com/2012/10/15/kashmir-witnessed-30-massacres-jkccs.html>]), Chota Bazar (32 killed on 11 June 1991; [Kashmir Times, 11 June 2012]), Aloosa (15 killed on 12 September 1991; [Kashmir witnessed 30 massacres: JKCCS, <http://www.kashmirglobal.com/2012/10/15/kashmir-witnessed-30-massacres-jkccs.html>]), Sopore (55 killed on 6 January 1993; [Outcry in Delhi over Kashmir Massacres, *The Independent*, London, 8 January 1993]), Lal Chowk (125 killed in conflagration and ensuing firing on 10 April 1993; [Gargan, Edward, "Indian Troops are Blamed as Kashmir Violence Rises," *New York Times*, 18 April 1993]), Bijbehara (37 killed on 22 October 1993; [Siddarth Varadarajan and Manoj Joshi, "BSF record: Guilty are Seldom Punished," *Times of India*, 21 April 2002]).

The burning down of neighbourhoods after gunfire with armed militants include Sopore (250 shops and 50 homes were burnt down [locals claimed 450 buildings were set ablaze]) and Lal Chowk (50 homes and 200 shops were burnt down).

The enforced disappearances are in thousands (The reported 8,000–10,000 enforced disappearances in Indian-administered Kashmir are just one part of a series of human rights violations attributed to the Indian government, including extra-judicial killings, torture and illegal detentions. Azad Esa, *Aljazeera*, 17 April 2011, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/04/2011414213950201149.html>).

The custodial killings have been reported in hundreds. (Jammu and Kashmir Government informed the State Legislative Council on 31 March 2011 that 341 were killed in custody since 1990.) Mass rapes include Kunan Posapora (53

women raped during the intervening night of 23–24 February 1991, *The Siasat Daily*, 27 June 2013; [Indian minister for external affairs, Salman Khurshid said he was ashamed that such an incident happened in his country, *Business Standard*, 28 June 2013], Saidpora, Shopian (At least 6 but probably 9 women including an 11-years-old girl and a 60-years-old woman gang raped; "Rape in Kashmir: A Crime of War," *Asia Watch and Physicians for Human Rights*, 8.) and Shopian (two young women aged 22 and 17 were gang raped and murdered on 29 May 2009, erupting entire Kashmir in protest.).

The Indian Government summarily dismissed as attempts to malign its armed forces the reports of these gruesome incidents documented by international human rights groups like the *Amnesty International*, the *Asia Watch* or by those within India itself.

8. Watali was DIG of Police, known for his anti-resistance profile. He was saved in an attack on 18 September 1988 while the alleged assailant, Ajaz Dar, was killed in the gunfight.
9. According to Kashmir Police, the first case of murder of a Kashmiri Pandit was of a woman, Prabhavati from Nawagari, Chadoora in Budgam district. According to police records, Prabhavati was killed at Hari Singh High Street on 14 March 1989. Her killers remained untraced (*Indian Express*, 5 May 2008). The report does not make it clear if the murder was militancy related.
10. Bhat was hanged in India's Tihar Jail on 11 February 1984.
11. There were many other prominent Muslims who fell victims to unknown guns that ruled the roost for several years in Kashmir. Some of these were Professor Abdul Ahad Wani (killed on 31 December 1993), Dr Abdul Ahad Guru (abducted on 1 April 1993 and body recovered next day), Mirwaiz of South Kashmir, Dr Qazi Nisar (killed on 19 June 1994), former Speaker of Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly, Wali Mohammad Itoo (killed on 19 March 1995), Dr Ghulam Qadir Wani (killed on 4 November 1998), legislator Abdul Ahad Kar (killed on 15 May 1999), Abdul Gani Lone (killed on 21 May 2002) and Dr Sheikh Jalaluddin (killed on 18 July 2013).
12. Sayeed, a Kashmiri politician and twice Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, had taken over as the Home Minister of India in the V. P. Singh-led government only five days prior to the kidnapping incident. He was the only Muslim who held this position in free India. Five JKLF men, who were released in exchange of Rubaiya's freedom, included Sheikh Abdul Hameed, Ghulam Nabi Butt, Noor Muhammad Kalwal, Muhammad Altaf and Javed Ahmad Zargar. Following their release, Rubaiya was set free on 13 December 1989.
13. In a telephonic interview from New Delhi with the author on 8 June 2015.
14. Bhasin, *Three Case Studies, Media Coverage on Forced Displacement in Contemporary India*.
15. Omar Abdullah, Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, in an interview with *Greater Kashmir* published on 6 July 2013.
16. Dulat and Sinha, *Kashmir: The Vajpayee Years*, 205.
17. Ibid., 306.

18. Vijay Bakaya (former Chief Secretary, Jammu and Kashmir); Pradeep Magazine, “From the Valley, A Selective Remembrance of Things Past,” *The Hindu*, 8 February 2013.
19. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 5–12 May 1990. Also quoted by Khalid Wasim Hassan in his paper, “Migration of Kashmiri Pandits: Kashmiriyat Challenged?”
20. Jammu and Kashmir Police Department figures show 43,849 persons including 16,929 civilians, 21,499 militants and 5,421 security forces personnel killed between January 1990 and April 2013.
21. PSA is another draconian law enacted in Kashmir to silence dissent. Successive governments have misused the Act under which an arrested person is denied access to lawyers or family for a prolonged period. During the 2010 unrest in the Valley, scores of underage children were arrested under the Act and lodged in jails.
22. Gossman, “Human Rights in India: Kashmir Under Siege,” 149–50.
23. Bhasin, *Three Case Studies, Media Coverage on Forced Displacement in Contemporary India*.
24. Trissal, *Kashmiri Pandit: At the Crossroads of History*; Grover, *The Story of Kashmir: Yesterday and Today*, 737.
25. Tikoo, Professor Manohar Nath in an interview with *Kashmirwatch.com*; Abdul Majid Zargar, *Greater Kashmir*, 30 January 2011. http://www.kashmir-issue.com/images3/mn_tickoo.pdf
26. *The Hindu*, “There Are No Goodbyes,” 20 January 2014.
27. Magazine, *The Hindustan Times*, 15 July 2016.
28. Tarkunde, *Report on Kashmir*, April 1990.
29. Saadut, “Is Pain a Feudal Right?” *Speaking Chinar*. http://www.saadut.com/2014_01_19_archive.html
30. Chowdhary, “Religion and Conflict in Jammu and Kashmir,” 164–66.
31. Ibid., 166–67.
32. Ibid., 167.
33. Zainagairee, *Greater Kashmir*, 12 September 2001.
34. Ahmed Ali Fayyaz’s Facebook post on 17 July 2016.
35. Hassan, *Migration of Kashmiri Pandits: Kashmiriyat Challenged?* 10.
36. On 26 June 1975, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi imposed Emergency in India after the Allahabad High Court unseated her in a case of election fraud filed by her rival, Raj Narain. During the Emergency civil liberties were suspended and Gandhi ruled the country for 21 months with an iron fist until she decided to call fresh elections in which she and her Congress Party suffered humiliating defeat.
37. Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict: India*, 154.
38. Jaleel, “CRPF Men Fired on People Injured and Crying for Help. I pretended to be dead,” *Indian Express*, 22 January 2013.
39. Gossman, “Human Rights in India: Kashmir Under Siege,” 14.
40. Schofield, *Kashmir in Conflict: India*, 154
41. Mirwatz Molvi Mohammad Farooq was killed by unidentified gunmen at his Nigeen residence on 21 May 1990. The incident resulted in widespread protests.

As thousands of mourners were carrying the body of the slain leader, paramilitary troops stationed at the Islamia College at Hawal in downtown Srinagar opened indiscriminate fire, killing scores of them.

42. *Rising Kashmir*, 27 January 2016; Nasir Ahmad, *Pandit Migration: A Bloody Game*.
43. Wanchoo was killed in mysterious circumstances on December 5, 1992, weeks after he gave a call to Kashmiri Pandit migrants to come out of the clutches of Hindu fundamentalists, referring to the bomb blast in Jammu in which one Kashmiri Pandit youth was killed and his accomplice was caught.

A free-lance photographer, who said that he received a call at about 10.00 a.m. saying that a dead body had been found in Karannagar, went to the place and saw the body lying face down on Balgarden Street, clutching a sheaf of papers in one hand. When the photographer turned the body over, he saw that it was Wanchoo. There was blood on the face and chest, and a bullet hole in the neck. The papers in Wanchoo's hands were documents about human rights cases on which he had been working.

Human Rights Watch, "The Human Rights Crisis in Kashmir: A Pattern of Impunity," 132.

44. *Pandit Inkhab: Propaganda Aur Haqaiq*, Weekly, *Takbeer-e-Nav*, Annual Issue 1990.
45. Khurram Parvez's post on his Facebook wall on 21 January 2016.
46. Gossman, "Human Rights in India: Kashmir Under Siege," 148.
47. Jagmohan, *My Frozen Turbulence in Kashmir*, 473.
48. Koul, *Daily Aksa*, 18 September 1990.
49. Motilal Bhat in Azad Essa "Kashmiri Pandits: Why We Never Fled Kashmir," *Aljazeera*. <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/spotlight/kashmirtheforgottencConflict/2011/07/201176134818984961.html>
50. Mridu Rai in an interview with Aljazeera. Azad, *Kashmir: The Pandit Question*. <http://english.aljazeera.net/indepth/spotlight/kashmirtheforgottencConflict/2011/07/2011724204546645823.html>
51. Habibullah, *My Kashmir: Conflict and the Enduring Peace*, 73–74.
52. Bhasin, *Three Case Studies-Media Coverage on Forced Displacement in Contemporary India*.
53. In a telephonic interview from New Delhi with the author on 8 June 2015.
54. Azad, *Kashmir: The Pandit Question*. Mridu Rai in an interview with *Aljazeera*. <http://english.aljazeera.net/indepth/spotlight/kashmirtheforgottencConflict/2011/07/2011724204546645823.html>
55. Neerja Mattoo, *Panel discussion. Kashmir: Is the Hindu-Muslim Divide Surmountable?*, 3rd Edition of Goa Arts and Literary Festival, 13–17 December 2012. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Nea7SOq8Cc&list=PLyergfuC1KUTmT856YY-Y1y2qvi37fZ7K&index=50>
Mattoo is an educationist and prominent Kashmiri Pandit lady.

56. Puri, *Kashmir Insurgency and After*, 71. Puri was decorated with the third highest Indian civilian award, Padma Bhushan. His statement that he found no hostility among common Muslims in Kashmir against the Pandits and that allegations of gross violations of human rights by the security forces needed an impartial probe earned him the ire of Kashmiri Pandits who demonstrated against him and burnt his effigy in Jammu. He passed away on 30 August 2014 at the age of 86.
57. Rajnath mailed an Inland Letter Card, dated 20 December 1990, to Mushtaq which opens with a prayer: "Hope by God's grace everything is fine there." He further writes, "I tried to write you earlier but due to ill health had to postpone. Anyhow. How is everybody there? I came here in end July—that too when security people at Karan Nagar forced us to leave." Missing his Muslim colleagues back in Kashmir, Rajnath writes, "Convey my salams to Respected Hakani Sahab. I missed his company. I missed other members of the Unit office also. Convey my salams to everybody." Satirist Zareef Ahmad has preserved this letter.
58. Singh, *Kashmir: A Tragedy of Errors*; Mattu, *Greater Kashmir*, 1 August 2001.
59. Committee for Initiative on Kashmir, *Kashmir Imprisoned: A Report*, 17.
60. Hassan, *Migration of Kashmiri Pandits: Kashmiriyat Challenged?*, 10.
61. Mattu, "The Pandit Migration-I," *Greater Kashmir*, 1 August 2001.
62. Jagmohan, *My Frozen Turbulence in Kashmir*, 477–84.
63. Saadut, "Is Pain a Feudal Right?" *Speaking Chinar*. http://www.saadut.com/2014_01_19_archive.html
64. Chowdhary, *Religion and Conflict in Jammu and Kashmir*, 167.
65. On 22 March 1997, seven Kashmiri Pandits were killed by unidentified gunmen in this village of Central Kashmir district of Budgam.
66. On 25 January 1998, as many as 23 innocent Kashmiri Pandits were massacred by unidentified gunmen in this North Kashmir village of Ganderbal district.
67. On 24 March 2003, as many as 24 Kashmir Pandits were gunned down by unidentified gunmen, reportedly in army fatigues, in this south Kashmir village of Shopian district.
68. *The Rising Kashmir*, 24 March 2016.
69. Ibid.
70. *Greater Kashmir*, 23 March 2014.
71. Ibid.; Also Khuram Parvez's Facebook wall post on 23 March 2016.
72. Ibid.
73. United News of India (UNI), UNI AG RR BS 1607. www.oneindia.com/2006/10/27/warm-reception-to-bitta-karate-in-srinagar-on-his-release-1161948974.html
74. Ibid.
75. Sanjay Tikoo, the President of KPSS, quoted by *IANS*, 23 March 2015.
76. Dulat disclosed this in an interview with NDTV's Barkha Dutt. *Kashmir Observer*, <https://kashmirobserver.net/2016/local-news/india-funded-militants-kashmir-counter-isi-dulat-9558>

77. Parvez Khurram, Spokesman of Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society, *Kashmir Life Online*, 23 March 2015.
78. Colin Freeman, "The Meadow by Adrian Levy and Cathy Scott-Clark: Review," 18 April 2012. www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/non-fiction-reviews/9200926/The-Meadow-by-Adrian-Levy-and-Cathy-Scott-Clark-review.html
79. Saadut, "Is Pain a Feudal Right?" *Speaking Chinar*. http://www.saadut.com/2014_01_19_archive.html
80. *Greater Kashmir*, 21 April 2009.
81. Jagmohan, *My Frozen Turbulence in Kashmir*, 541.
82. Sharmishta, *Endless Longings: Journey of a Kashmiri Girl*, 54. The book stands out as a truthful narration of adversities associated with uprooting from one's land and the accompanying hardships of a migrant life, as against the reams of propagandist literature produced on the subject.
83. Ibid.
84. Hassan, *Migration of Kashmiri Pandits: Kashmiriyat Challenged?*, 10–11. Hassan interviewed a migrant Pandit teacher, Bhan, who ran a coaching centre for Medical Entrance Test at Karan Nagar in Srinagar before his migration to Jammu in 1990.
85. Priyanka Bhatt on her Facebook page, 13 January 2016, (7:31 p.m.).
86. Bhasin, *Three Case Studies, Media Coverage on Forced Displacement in Contemporary India*.
87. M. Rasgotra (*Slow Eviction of Pandits from Kashmir*), for instance, refers to the Census Report of 1981 as giving the total population of Kashmiri Pandits "a little over 124,000," and in the next breath says that 300,000 of them fled from the Valley in 1990. (www.kashmir-information.com/Miscellaneous/Rasgotra1.html). This would mean that the Pandits registered an incredible growth of 127 per cent in 9 years as against 6.75 per cent between 1971 and 1981.
88. Jammu and Kashmir Census Report 1981; Toshkhani and Warikoo, *Cultural Heritage of Kashmiri Pandits*, 339. (This book gives total population of Kashmiri Pandits in 1981 as 123,828.)
89. Toshkhani and Warikoo, *Cultural Heritage of Kashmiri Pandits*, 339.
90. Ibid.
91. *India Today*, 30 April 1990, 10.
92. Gossman, "Human Rights in India: Kashmir Under Siege," 147.
93. Ibid., 6.
94. Evans, "A Departure from History: Kashmiri Pandits, 1990–2001," 19–37.
95. Bhasin, *Three Case Studies, Media Coverage on Forced Displacement in Contemporary India*.
96. That is how Rahul Pandita describes Jagmohan in his Tweet on 25 January 2016 after the latter was awarded Padma Vibhushan, India's second highest civilian award. Kashmir's civil society criticized the selection of Jagmohan for the award and alleged that the ex-governor was actually honoured for mass killing of Muslims he supervised in Kashmir.

97. PTI news report dated 30 July 2013. "President-Kashmiri Samiti Delhi Rakesh Kaul, in his address made an emotional speech regarding the pitiable condition of the displaced community in the Jagti camp and also the sorry state of affairs of the displaced traders and teachers at Delhi. He gave the detailed account of cultural genocide being perpetrated against the hapless community in Kashmir. He also claimed that the names of many towns and historical places in Kashmir have been changed into Islamic lexicon."
98. *Koshur Encyclopaedia*, vol 1, 24. It is a J&K Academy of Art, Culture and Languages publication published in 1986.
99. Stein, *Kalhana's Rajatarangini*, 466–67.
100. Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir government on Tuesday said 219 Kashmiri Pandits were killed by militants since 1989 while 24,202 families were among the total 38,119 families which migrated out of the Valley due to turmoil. Replying to a question from People's Democratic Party member Syed Basharat Bukhari, Revenue Minister Raman Bhalla told the Assembly in Jammu that '219 Pandits were killed in Kashmir from 1989 to 2004. From 2004, no killing of any person from the community [Kashmiri Pandits] took place till now,' Mr Bhalla said.

A total number of 38,119 families comprising 1,42,042 Kashmiri migrants were registered with the Revenue and Relief Ministry till now.

The Minister said the Government had also paid an ex gratia of Rs. 1 lakh for each death. 'Besides, an amount of Rs. 39,64,91,838 has been paid as compensation to the Pandits on account of damage to their properties since the eruption of militancy', he said.

An amount of Rs. 71.95 crore was spent in providing relief and other facilities to the Kashmiri migrants living in Jammu and other parts in 2007–08, Rs. 70.33 crore in 2008–09 and Rs. 68.59 crore from 2009 up to January, 2010.

Mr Bhalla said the government was committed to facilitating their return to Kashmir but regretted that no action could be taken on various plans and recommendations as the situation was not conducive for their return. 'With the improvement in the situation in the Valley, the government decided to construct 200 flats at an estimated cost of Rs. 22.90 crore at Sheikhpura Budgam in 2004. And 120 flats have so far been completed of which possession of 60 flats was taken over by the department and inspection of other 60 flats is going on. The construction of remaining 80 flats shall be completed during 2010. Besides, 18 flats have also been constructed through the Jammu and Kashmir Housing Board at Mattan Anantnag', he told the House.

A committee headed by M. L. Koul, the then Finance Commissioner, Planning and Development Department, was formed to prepare an action plan for the return and rehabilitation of Kashmiri migrants to the Valley. In its report submitted to the Government in 1997–98, the Committee recommended a package of Rs. 2,799.11 crore for the return of migrants.

Mr. Bhalla said a special package of Rs. 1,618.40 crore was sanctioned by the Government of India for the return and rehabilitation of the migrants. ‘Under this scheme, 3,000 supernumerary posts have been created, exclusively for the Kashmiri migrants, willing to return to the Valley. These posts have already been referred to the recruiting agencies and the process for the selection of these posts is on’, he said.

But, despite all these rehabilitation packages, not a single Kashmiri migrant has returned to the Valley, the Minister rued.

He said that 808 Pandit families consisting of 3,445 people were still living in the Valley. ‘These families have never migrated’, he said. *The Hindu*, 24 March 2010.

101. PTI news report dated 16 August 2011 carried by *Greater Kashmir* on 17 August 2011, quoted Indian Minister of State for Home, Jitendra Singh as informing the Lok Sabha (Lower House of the Indian Parliament) that “219 Kashmiri Pandits were killed in the State [Jammu and Kashmir] since 1989 and 58,697 families are reported to have left their homes due to the onset of militancy in Kashmir Valley.”
102. Randeep Singh Nandal, *Times of India*, [<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/State-data-refutes-claim-of-1-lakh-killed-in-Kashmir/article-show/8918214.cms>]
103. Ibid.
104. Rahul Bhat, *Kashmir Times*, 3 February 2015.
105. Tikoo, Sanjay, “We do not agree with this propaganda from outside that 3000 to 4000 Pandits were killed in Kashmir” (*Greater Kashmir*, 20 June 2011). Incidentally, in January 2016 (*Greater Kashmir*, 29 January 2016), Tikoo revised his figure of Pandit casualties to 670 without citing any reason why he did not stick to his earlier quoted figure.
106. Motilal Bhat, “Kashmiri Pandits: Not An Easy Going for Those Who Stayed On – I,” *Kashmir Times*, 24 July 2013.
107. Kashmiri Pandit Network, “Atrocities on Women and Children.” <http://ikashmir.net/atrocities/1.html>
108. To a question whether this incident took place, asked under the RTI Act, 2009, the District Police Office, Srinagar, vide letter No. HQ/2015/RTI/S-59/559, dated 19 September 2015, replied with an emphatic ‘No’.
109. Kashmiri Pandit Network, “Atrocities on Women and Children.” <http://ikashmir.net/atrocities/1.html>
110. Letter from District Police Office, Srinagar, vide No. HQ/2015/RTI/S-59/559, dated 19 September 2015.
111. Ibid.
112. Kashmiri Pandit Network, “Atrocities on Women and Children.” <http://ikashmir.net/atrocities/1.html>
113. Letter from District Police Office, Srinagar vide No. HQ/2015/RTI/S-59/559, dated 19 September 2015.
114. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_rights_abuses_in_Jammu_and_Kashmir

115. *Kashmir Forum.* <http://www.kashmirforum.org/violence-against-kashmiri-hindus.htm>, accessed 20 November 2016.
116. Kashmiri Pandit Network, "Atrocities on Women and Children." <http://ikashmir.net/atrocities/1.html>
117. Letter of Deputy Superintendent of Police, (HQrs) Pulwama vide No. Hqrs-55A/RTI/2015/5615-16, dated 17 September 2015, issued in response to an RTI application by the present author.
118. Hinduism Today, "Kashmir's Crisis." www.hinduismtoday.com/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=3877
119. <http://koausa.org/history/genocide.html>
120. Babri Mosque was built in the 16th century during the reign of the first Mughal ruler of India, Zahiruddin Babar. Some Hindu groups later alleged that it was built over the site of a temple. The dispute led to communal polarization and litigation between the two communities. BJP spearheaded a campaign for reclaiming the site as the birthplace of Ram, a Hindu god, and building a Ram Temple over it. On 6 December 1992, when the matter was still in the court, tens of thousands of Hindu activists descended in Ayodhya in the presence of the top BJP leadership and demolished the mosque in broad daylight.
121. Harinder Baweja, "Damaging Lies," *Indiatoday.in*, 28 February 1993. india-today.intoday.in/story/bjp-rants-about-temples-in-kashmir-being-destroyed-but-claims-fall-flat/1/301723.html
122. Ibid.
123. Ibid.
124. Ibid. Verghese earned wide condemnation from rights groups for giving a clean chit to the perpetrators of the Kunanposh Pora mass rape.
125. Ibid.
126. Ibid. Ajaz Kakroo who was the Deputy Commissioner of Baramulla district in 2005, and who hails from the town, does not recall the two temples referred to in the *India Today* report as being damaged. On 8 October 2005, the day Kashmir was struck by a massive earthquake, he accompanied Governor S. K. Sinha to Shailputri temple and found it functional.
127. Ibid.
128. Ibid.
129. Ibid.
130. Ibid.
131. Puri, *Kashmir: Insurgency and After*, 73.
132. Ibid., 72-73.
133. *Times of India* and DNA, Online edition, 8 July 2009.
134. *Rising Kashmir*, 22 July 2015.
135. *The Sunday Guardian*, Online edition, 27 May 2012.
136. Chopra, *Rising Kashmir*, 4 April 2015.
137. Sukhdeep Kour, "J-K floods: When Waters Rose, Muslims in Srinagar Rescued Pandits," *The Hindustan Times*, Online edition. 16 September 2014.

138. Seema Mustafa, *Rising Kashmir*. <http://www.risingkashmir.com/when-pak-journalists-maintained-silence-on-kashmir/>
139. Shekhar Gupta, *Indiatoday.in*, 9 October 2014.
140. "Tempted Temporality," *Kashmir Life*, 8 April 2013.
141. Ibid.
142. Ibid.
143. Bhasin, *Three Case Studies, Media Coverage on Forced Displacement in Contemporary India*.
144. *The Hindu*, 24 March 2010. Interestingly, in July 2014, the BJP Government at the Centre, through a press release of its Home Ministry, gave the number of the total families, including some Sikh and Muslim families, migrating from Kashmir to Jammu, Delhi and other parts of India as 57,000. It also mentioned 60,452 migrant families as registered 'at present' in different parts of India including 38,119 at Jammu and 19,338 at Delhi (Handout of the Press Bureau of Information, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, dated July 14, 2014, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=106628>).
145. In June 2016, Jammu and Kashmir Government informed the State Assembly that a total of 154,000 people had migrated from Kashmir in the wake of militancy; see *Greater Kashmir*, 9 June 2016. These also include Muslims and Sikhs.
146. Saadut, "Is Pain a Feudal Right?" *Speaking Chinar*. http://www.saadut.com/2014_01_19_archive.html
147. "While Mr. Pandita [author of the book] holds the entire Muslim community complicit in the exodus and even implicates his neighbourhood, I know of many Pandits who say their Muslim friends and neighbours had no role to play in it and even pleaded with them not to leave." Pradeep Magazine, *The Hindu* [Debate], 8 February 2013.
148. A Kashmiri Pandit group Friday said Muslims cannot be blamed for mass exodus of their community from Kashmir and demanded thorough probe into Nadimarg, Vandhama and other incidents. 'Muslims have helped us during the most troubled times. They have suffered badly during past two decades. We cannot blame them for mass exodus of Pandits and other problems being faced by us', President Hindu Welfare Society of Kashmir (HWSK), A. K. Rajpuri, told reporters here. HWSK is an organisation of Pandits, who stayed back and did not migrate after eruption of militancy in the State.
Rajpuri said there should be a thorough investigation in various incidents, where their community members were targets. 'There should be thorough probe in Wandhama, Nadimarg, Chattisinghpura and other incidents'. He said Muslims can't be responsible for their mass exodus. 'I am myself living in a Muslim house. They arrange flowers for me for my prayers. They have helped us like their own family members'.

Rajpuri said there have been many occasions, where Muslims performed the last rites of the Pandits. 'Under no circumstances, should they (Muslims) be held responsible for our miseries'.

He said the Pandits staying back in Valley don't want security, which has been provided to them by the government. 'We are under chains. We do not need any security from the government. It should be removed from our areas', he said. HWSK President said police force deployed at their houses leave a bad impression on the minds of their children. 'Our children are scared of these forces. It has created fear psychosis among our children'. (*Rising Kashmir*, Srinagar, 12 October 2012)

149. Basharat Shameem, "Discerning Kashmir's Contemporary English Literature," <http://ddekku.edu.in/Portals/0/Etutorials/Discerning%20Kashmir's%20Contemporary%20English%20Literature.pdf>
150. Samreen Mushtaq, Ifrah Butt, Essar Batool, Natasha Rather and Munaza Rashid have co-authored the book, which was officially released at the Jaipur Literature Festival in January 2016. The book highlights the horrible occurrence that Batool termed as "one of the biggest incidents in the history of sexual violence in probably the whole of south Asia," adding, "People who have been part of cover ups and distortion of facts should worry about how they will sound" (*Greater Kashmir*, 22 February 2016). During the height of militancy in Kashmir in February 1991, an incident of 'mass rape by army' at Kunan Poshpora in border district of Kupwara came to light. There was international uproar over the incident. The Indian Government rejected the allegation. The Press Council of India appointed a team headed by senior journalist B. G. Verghese to look into the complaint. The team in its report absolved the army of any charges. International human rights organizations expressed serious doubts about the integrity of the investigation and the manner in which it was conducted, stating that the Indian government launched a "campaign to acquit the army of charges of human rights violations and discredit those who brought the charges" (Human Rights Watch World Report 1992).
151. They include Muhammad Junaid, Arher Zia, Arif Ayaz Paray, Irfan Mehraj, Uzma Falak, and Essar Batool.
152. For the first time in 26 years, a group of 29 outside Valley-based Kashmiri Pandits issued a statement of solidarity and support for Kashmiri Muslim students who have been targets of repeated attacks and intimidation by the right wing Hindu groups in different states of India. In a joint statement posted on social media on 8 April 2016, the group vowed to fight for the right of these Muslim students to education anywhere in India. Pertinently, as an adverse fallout of a continuous negative media publicity of Kashmir and its majority community, Kashmiri Muslim students studying in different educational institutions across India increasingly find themselves as target of hate groups.
153. AFSPA, promulgated in 1958 to quell insurgency in the North-East, was extended to Jammu and Kashmir in 1990. The Act empowers the armed forces

to kill a person on mere suspicion or arrest him or her without warrant, search or destroy houses and stop, search or seize a vehicle, making the opinion of the armed forces personnel, as low as a non-commissioned officer, to be sufficient cause for taking such a harsh action. The Act has come in for severe criticism for its rampant misuse in Kashmir. There have been lot of voices including from the incumbent provincial governments to repeal the Act, but the Indian Army has opposed all such moves. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, Christof Heyns, on a fact-finding mission in Kashmir in March 2012, called for the repeal of the Act, saying it has no role to play in a democracy (*The Hindu*, 31 March 2012). The International Commission of Jurists urged India to repeal the AFSPA without further delay. It observed: "The AFSPA has facilitated gross human rights violations by the armed forces in the areas in which it is operational. It is a repressive and draconian law that should have no place in today's India" (*Greater Kashmir*, 7 November 2015).

154. Christof Heyns, "United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions," *The Hindu*, 31 March 2012.
155. PTI. http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2010-09-15/news/27606037_1_afspa-withdrawal-kashmiri-pandits-panun-kashmir
156. Sameer Yasir, *First Post*, 20 January 2016. <http://www.firstpost.com/india/26-years-in-exile-heres-why-the-kashmiri-pandits-are-in-no-hurry-to-return-to-the-valley-2591406.html>

Chapter Eight

Homeland

Soon after, almost the entire community of Kashmiri Pandits left the Valley in 1990 and were confronted with challenges of a new and harsh environment, the radicals among them got together and assumed their leadership. In December 1990, they floated an organization called Panun Kashmir¹ (our own Kashmir), describing it as “a struggle to re-conquer that Kashmir which is almost lost,” and an effort to save Kashmiri Pandits, Kashmir and India.² Besides claiming to be a struggle for “survival as a cultural entity and an ancient race,” the organization described itself as “a movement for the political survival of over 700,000 Kashmiri Pandits in their birth land.”³

A year later, on 28 December 1991, Panun Kashmir adopted a resolution, *margdarshan* (guidance), at Jammu, calling for a separate and exclusive homeland for Kashmiri Pandits to be carved out of the “regions of the Valley to the East and North of river Jhelum.” The resolution further demanded that the homeland for Kashmiri Pandits “driven out of Kashmir in the past and who yearn to return and those who were forced to leave on account of the terrorist violence in Kashmir” be governed by the Constitution of India and placed under central administration with a Union Territory Status till it evolves its own economic and political infrastructure. The geographical area of the proposed homeland identified in a map circulated by Panun Kashmir comprises two-thirds of the entire Kashmir Valley, including lakes, rivers and mountain ranges.

To justify the demand for a separate Hindu Homeland, Panun Kashmir amplifies the old narrative that Kashmiri Pandits, a persecuted community, were the original inhabitants of Kashmir who have suffered heavily at the hands of Muslim rulers since the advent of Islam in Kashmir and who were forcibly reduced to a minority and

subjected to repeated migration over the centuries, the latest being in 1990. The resolution prefers to call Kashmiri Pandits as Kashmiri Hindus, and observes that

The Kashmiri Hindus have become the first victims of terrorism as a result of which they had to flee the place of their abode.

The Hindus in Kashmir have, right from the dawn of freedom faced and fought communalism and fundamentalism. They are a part of the Vedic heartland of India and have lived in Kashmir from times immemorial. In fact, they are the original inhabitants of the valley of Kashmir, now reduced to an ethnic minority, with a history of more than five thousand years dating back beyond the "Neelmat Era" almost contemporary to the Vedic civilization of India.

The proposed separate homeland is sought to be governed by the Constitution of India sans Article 370.⁴ In the absence of a separate homeland, Panun Kashmir rejects calls for return of Pandits to Kashmir, arguing that the community cannot return to the "servitude of a Muslim State."⁵

According to the map of the proposed separate homeland published by Panun Kashmir, it is sought to be created out of the parts of the districts of Anantnag, Pulwama, Srinagar, Baramulla and the whole of districts of Kulgam, Shopian, Ganderbal, Bandipora and Kupwara. Roughly, it covers about 10,600 sq. km of the Kashmir Valley's total area of about 15,500 sq. km, which means 68.38 per cent of the Valley is claimed for a mere 4 per cent population (as per 1981 census). In plain language, Panun Kashmir does not only want over 68 per cent of the total area of Kashmir but also throw millions of Muslims out of it to claim a separate and exclusive Hindu Homeland. ('Thrown out,' because there is no resettlement plan envisaged in Panun Kashmir proposal for them. Obviously, these millions of Kashmiri Muslims have to fend for themselves.) The claimed area is the most fertile region of Kashmir and is its rice bowl. Further, it includes almost all the water sources of Kashmir, including Jhelum, Lidder, Sindh, Dal Lake, Wular Lake, Manasbal Lake as well as its main glaciers—Kolahoi and Sheeshnag. It also lays claim on nearly all tourist destinations, including Verinag, Kokarnag, Achhabal, Daksum,

the Mughal Gardens, Dachigam, Sonamarg and Manasbal. Since the homeland is sought to be governed by the Constitution of India with no Article 370, it would be open for Hindus from different parts of India to acquire property and settle there.

Demand for a separate homeland has succeeded in generating support among the Pandits, especially the post-migration generation. Shyam Koul believes that the demand for a separate homeland “draws its strength essentially from the new generation in the age group of 20–40.”⁶ A large section of the community, particularly the old generation, was initially confused about or simply lukewarm to the idea, but there has been no outright rejection of the demand from within the community. Sanjay Tikoo of the KPSS is the sole voice to have openly opposed the demand for a separate homeland and observance of 19 January as the Holocaust Day. “We stayed put in Kashmir and faced tough times with our Muslim brethren and the day has no meaning for us,” Tikoo said in a press statement.⁷

Panun Kashmir intelligently uses the term ‘Kashmiri Hindus’ instead of the ‘Kashmiri Pandits’ to invoke empathy of a larger Hindu mass of India whom it wants to believe that the very survival of Kashmiri Pandits is at stake unless they are settled in a separate territory within Kashmir, fully protected by the Indian State. The right wing Hindu political organizations of India are too eager to support the idea. The BJP, subscribing as it were to the theory of persecution of Kashmiri Pandits, leads the bandwagon and makes the return of the migrants to Kashmir as an inalienable part of its politics. The ‘Global Meet of Pandits’ held at New Delhi in 2012 made a pitch for a ‘landing place’ for the community in the Valley, and “a wholesome Satellite City”⁸ was held out as an ideal refuge in Kashmir. The city is perceived to be self-sufficient in terms of “overall infrastructure, economic avenues, adequate land, decent accommodation, educational institutions, medical care, recreation centres and commercial infrastructures.”⁹

Although Panun Kashmir was successful in creating sympathy for its demand within a section of Hindus outside Kashmir, the erstwhile Congress-led United People’s Alliance Government in India did not come out in open support of a separate Hindu homeland. At the same time, however, the return of the migrant Pandits to Kashmir

remained its policy pursuit. In 2008, it announced a comprehensive package of ₹1,618.40 crore for their return and rehabilitation. The package provided for financial assistance for purchase and construction of houses, repair and renovation of damaged, unused and dilapidated houses, construction of transit accommodation, continuation of cash relief, students scholarship and employment, assistance to the agriculturists and horticulturist and waiver of interest on unpaid loans.¹⁰ As many as 1,474 state government jobs were created for the migrant Pandit youths and 505 transit accommodations, including 200 flats at Sheikhpura in the Central Kashmir district of Budgam, were constructed for them.¹¹ On 28 April 2015, the incumbent Home Minister, Rajnath Singh, told the Parliament that the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir had assured him to earmark 50 acres of land as a first instalment for exclusive townships for Kashmiri Pandits. Singh's ministry was planning 3–4 composite townships of 2,500 families each, including in Srinagar and Anantnag districts.¹² Earlier in 2013, Jammu and Kashmir Government had authorized Deputy Commissioners of various districts in the Valley to identify state land for setting up Pandit clusters. The government also decided to acquire private land where the state land was not available.¹³ In other words, it meant that where the government land was not available, private individuals (in this case Muslims) would be divested of their landed assets to rehabilitate Kashmiri Pandits. For many, the government decision brought back memories of the Dogra rule when Muslims in villages were divested of their landed holdings, which were distributed among non-Muslim elite.

For the RSS, Kashmir enjoys a special position in its ideology of de-Islamizing the 'Hindu land'. The organization considers the Valley as "its first regiment in its ideological battle right from the day of the State's accession to India on 26 October 1947."¹⁴ It claims to be awakening the Hindus against the "onslaught of Islamic imperialism on the centuries old glorious past of Hindu Kashmir,"¹⁵ which was "a seat of Hindu culture and learning,"¹⁶ at every step of which "there lie our worship and sacred place."¹⁷ The RSS started its tryst with Kashmir in 1944 when it opened a branch in Srinagar with Balraj Madhok as its chief who, in the wake of the Tribal Attack in October 1947, ran away from Kashmir reportedly leaving behind his motorcycle in

Srinagar. The organization is not reconciled to the reality of a Muslim majority Kashmir—a land which, like Panun Kashmir, it believes had a Hindu origin and was ‘Islamized’ by Muslim invaders after the 13th century AD.¹⁸ It wants to ‘reclaim’ Kashmir as the abode of Hindu deities. The conversion of its overwhelming population to Islam, it alleges, was brought about by force and coercion.

In 1947, when a Muslim-majority Hindu-ruled Jammu and Kashmir seemed to be going to Pakistan on the basis of the principle of the Partition, the RSS was toying with the idea of an independent state with a Hindu ruler to realize its dream of regaining Kashmir as a Hindu land. The organization having made strong inroads in Jammu and the royal palace, through an influential palace priest, Sant Dev, sold Maharaja Hari Singh the dream of being the monarch of an independent country separate from both India and Pakistan. A day after Pakistan was born, when India made its tryst with independence on 15 August 1947, there were celebrations in Jammu, not to rejoice the freedom of India but the independence of Jammu and Kashmir under Hari Singh. Senior journalist and a close watcher of the developments of that period, Ved Bhasin, recalls that pro-Maharaja organizations like Hindu Rajya Sabha and the RSS put up banners across the city roads along with the Maharaja’s flag proclaiming Hari Singh as the ‘Maharaja Adhiraj Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, Tibet Ha’ (ruler of Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh, Tibet, etc., as the state was known then).¹⁹ The banners celebrated an independent Jammu and Kashmir, and the RSS was prominent in the show of this sentiment. The RSS and the pro-Maharaja forces even tore the Indian National Flag when it was hoisted in the city and attacked those who had unfurled it. Reflecting on the development, Bhasin says:

After the formation of popular Government headed by Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah when the Students Union hoisted the Indian National Flag and the National Conference Flag on the Prince of Wales College, these were torn by RSS supporters next morning. The tearing apart of the flags was followed by an attack on the Union activists.²⁰

The RSS wishes away the 480-year (1339–1819) long Muslim rule in Kashmir as well as its Muslim majority character. Its agenda for

Kashmir was explicitly spelt out by its mouthpiece, The *Organiser*, as early as on 6 November 1947, through an editorial titled "Importance of Kashmir." It unveils the plan to deal with the Muslim majority of the land thus: "Kashmir has vast space for the expansion of population. If industrialized, it can absorb crores of people [from rest of India]." Senior BJP leader, Subramaniam Swami, who advocates demographic change in Kashmir as an ideal solution for Muslim separatism, campaigns for settling 1,000,000 ex-servicemen and families in Kashmir and abrogation of the Article 370 of the Indian Constitution.²¹ The Article is under severe attack from the RSS, and its abrogation is high on the agenda of the ruling BJP. Swami contends that every Hindu has a claim on Kashmir and that his own claim flows from his *gotra*, Kashyapa,²² a mythical character said to have reclaimed Kashmir Valley from the huge Satisar Lake. Constitutional experts have opined that the abrogation of the Article 370 would pose a serious challenge to Jammu and Kashmir's relationship with the Indian Union and could restore the former Princely State to the pre-1947 position. The ruling BJP Government in Delhi has now shifted focus to the Article 35A of the Indian Constitution that debars non-residents of Jammu and Kashmir from buying land or property, getting a government job or voting in assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir. The Article 35A is powered by Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, and allows the State to grant special privileges and rights to its permanent residents. A Delhi-based RSS-backed organization, Jammu and Kashmir Study Centre, has moved the Supreme Court of India to do away with the Article.

The BJP Government's intentions on the alleged demographic engineering in Kashmir came to the fore recently through a letter written by the Indian Minister of defence, Manohar Parrikar to his party colleague and fellow parliamentarian, Tarun Vijay, informing him that he has asked the Jammu and Kashmir Government to take appropriate action on providing land to ex-servicemen who have served in Kashmir for at least three years or died in action there.²³ Vijay had also demanded a 25-year tax holiday for such soldiers who "initiate an industry or any enterprise"²⁴ in Kashmir. The disclosure of the Parrikar letter took the lid of some serious developments that had secretly taken place behind the back of the majority community

of Kashmir. In 2012, a proposal was moved to set up settlement in Kashmir for retired and serving soldiers of the Indian Army. The proposal was cleared in 2015 by the Rajya Sainik Board (State Soldiers' Board), headed by Jammu and Kashmir Governor, N. N. Vohra. In the month of August, newspapers reported that the State Government had identified 173 kanals (21 acres) of land near the Srinagar Airport for the Sainik Colony, and that 6,000 retired and serving soldiers had applied for plots in the proposed colony.²⁵ The applicants include 340 Kashmiri Pandit ex-soldiers.²⁶ In view of the large number of applicants, the Governor was reported to be contemplating to ask for the entire 416 kanal stretch of government land available there. The *Kashmir Reader* quoted a Home Department official confirming that "servicemen from other parts of India also will be settled in the colony."²⁷ The Mufti Mohammad Sayeed led BJP–PDP (PDP stands for Peoples Democratic Party) coalition Government in Jammu and Kashmir reacted to the disclosure with contradictory statements "from an endorsement with riders to outright denial."²⁸ Sayeed's daughter, Mehbooba Mufti, who stepped into the shoes of her father as Chief Minister, denied that her government was pursuing any proposal for setting up *sainik* colonies in Kashmir even as district heads were instructed to speed up process for identifying land for the purpose. Tarun Vijay, a BJP lawmaker of India, spilled the beans by claiming that Mehbooba Mufti was his good friend in whom he had trust and that she would set up *sainik* colonies at appropriate time. He said that the proposed *sainik* colonies "would bring fragrance of Indianness and principal mainstream of patriotic India to Valley to overcome the smell of stone pelting and guns."²⁹ Vijay was poetically referring to his party's dream project—full integration of Kashmir with India—that Kashmiris view as the real motive of setting up of the *sainik* colonies, and vehemently resist. The disclosure set alarm bells ringing and created uproar in Kashmir. People in general and the separatist organizations in particular accused the State Government of working on the RSS agenda in Kashmir.³⁰ The academic and civil society circles rejected the *sainik* colony as the "Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's avowed agenda of settling outsiders in the Valley"³¹ and "a sensitive issue with implication in Kashmir."³² Questions were raised as to why a separate *sainik* colony was planned in the Valley "when every nook

and corner of this place is militarised.”³³ Omar Abdullah condemned the proposal as “a ruse to settle non-state subjects in Kashmir,” a scenario that Syed Ali Shah Geelani termed as an open aggression on Kashmir and “a resist or die like situation for Kashmiri people.”³⁴

Demand for a separate homeland or the announcement of separate settlements by the present BJP Government in New Delhi evoked both severe condemnation and instant rejection in Kashmir equally by the masses, various pro-India political parties as well as separatist organizations. Even the BJP, though never openly rejecting the demand for a separate homeland, did not officially push this idea neither during its first stint in power (1998–2003) as the lead coalition partner nor now when it runs the federal government with absolute parliamentary majority since 2014. Instead, it came up with the separate settlements plan, which also drew flak, apart from the Kashmiri resistance groups, from both the pro-India political parties in the Valley and the non-BJP political parties of India, including the Indian National Congress. Although the Government of India has now informed the Parliament that there was no proposal for setting up “separate colonies for Kashmiri Pandits in Jammu and Kashmir,”³⁵ the majority population in the Valley views the statement as a ploy, especially in view of repeated assertions by BJP leaders that separate colonies for the migrant Pandits and former soldiers would be created in Kashmir.

Within Kashmir, former Chief Minister and leader of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, Omar Abdullah, rejected the idea of separate settlements as “ghettos in segregated and inherently unsafe camps.”³⁶ The Chairman, JKLF, Mohammad Yasin Malik, opposed the move warning that separate settlements would not be allowed.³⁷ The Chairman of All Parties Hurriyat Conference (G), Syed Ali Shah Geelani, called for a general strike and peaceful protest against the proposed settlements while welcoming the return of migrant Pandits to their original places of living.³⁸ He appealed the Pandits “not to accept this plan which will only divide our society and create civil strife.”³⁹ Mirwaiz of Kashmir and Chairman of All Parties Hurriyat Conference (M), Maulvi Umar Farooq, rejected the separate settlement plan as “a ploy to divide the people of Kashmir on communal lines.”⁴⁰ The separatist leaders decided to close their ranks and present a joint fight against the plan. For the first time since the All Parties

Hurriyat Conference split in 2003, the leaders of two factions, along with Mohammad Yasin Malik of the JKLF, met over an *iftaar* party hosted by Syed Ali Shah Geelani and resolved to start a long-term agitation against the BJP–PDP coalition government. The civil society of Kashmir was also up in arms against the government plan.

Apprehensions in Kashmir were further heightened by reports that the Government of India was planning to connect Pahalgam and Sonamarg, the two base camps for the Amarnath yatra, with rail link. The development was seen in conjunction with the earlier reports that during the controversial governorship of S. K. Sinha, a proposal was secretly being worked out to create a Hindu pilgrim circuit by connecting the Amarnath shrine with the Ragnya Devi Temple at Tulmulla in Ganderbal district, the to-be reconstructed, and extended Ganpatyar Temple in downtown Srinagar and the Martand temple at Mattan in South Kashmir. En route, many small temples were reportedly also envisaged. A retired official of the State Government confirmed that the Government of India had sought views of the State Government on the proposal. Could it be more than a coincidence that the proposed circuit falls within the territory claimed as homeland by Panun Kashmir? While as the plan is viewed as a serious threat to the Muslim character of Kashmir, a target of the RSS and its affiliated right wing Hindu groups of India, the Kashmir Centre for Social and Development Studies (KCSDS), a civil society initiative, opposed the proposed rail connectivity of Pahalgam and Sonamarg on environmental grounds. It termed the plan as disastrous for the ecologically fragile area already under tremendous stress because of a huge number of visitors. Mehbooba Mufti, the then leader of the ruling coalition partner, PDP, was severely criticized for pursuing with the Indian Minister for Railways the rail connectivity for the two tourist destinations. The General Secretary of the BJP and its point man in Kashmir, Ram Madhav's statement that the BJP–PDP coalition Government in Kashmir was functioning according to Syama Prasad Mukherjee's ideology⁴¹ has added to the concerns of Kashmiri Muslims about the RSS plan on Kashmir. Mukherjee was an avowed opponent of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir under the Indian Constitution.

A controversial remark by Mehbooba Mufti added fuel to the fire ignited by the debate on separate settlements for Kashmiri Pandits.

During her maiden speech as Chief Minister in the State Assembly, she denied that her BJP-supported Government was setting up separate settlements for migrant Kashmiri Pandits but at the same time announced that transit colonies would be constructed to provide them breathing time before they move to their original places. However, she stirred the hornet's nest by the analogy she used in support of her argument. "As of now we can't put them like pigeons among cats,"⁴² she told the Assembly. This 'hunter and hunted' inference drawn by no less a person than the Chief Minister herself heightened public anger. Both separatist and opposition parties condemned her for, what they alleged, demonizing the Muslim majority of Kashmir. She was accused of suggesting that Kashmiri Pandits were unsafe in the company of Kashmiri Muslims.⁴³ The reckless analogy was soon exposed by 35 Hindu business families living safely among Kashmiri Muslims in the heart of North Kashmir's Kupwara town. The families had migrated to Jammu in 1990 but voluntarily returned five years later, and "are an integral part of the local community."⁴⁴ For Manoj Kumar, General Secretary Traders' Federation, Kupwara, "it is better to live in Tihar Jail than reside in separate colonies."⁴⁵

Within days of the Chief Minister's remark, Nisha, a girl from Jammu married to Satish Kumar, a Kashmiri Pandit of Sirnoo village in South Kashmir's Pulwama town, trashed the perception about the Pandits living among Muslim dwellings like 'pigeons among cats'. She told a journalist:

When I got married, I was very much scared. I was concerned about our security after I saw our house surrounded by Muslim dwellings. But my fears got away after seeing the love and affection of my Muslim neighbours here. Among them, I never feel being outside my home.... The people here take our care more than members of our own community would do.⁴⁶

There are 14 Pandit families living with their Muslim neighbours in Sirnoo and among them Rakesh Kumar and Mohammad Akbar Sofi, along with their families, jointly live in a house: a conspicuous example of a 'pigeon' coexisting with a 'cat'!

The widespread resentment against separate settlements forced (at least for now) the State Government to announce that no such move

was in the offing. However, Panun Kashmir was quick to reiterate that the “rehabilitation of the community was only possible if a separate homeland with the status of Union Territory was created within the Valley.”⁴⁷ A faction of Panun Kashmir described those Pandits who were not supportive of a separate homeland as ‘victim collaborators within the community’ harnessed by the government of the day for political expediency.⁴⁸

Over the years, Panun Kashmir has succeeded in introducing a politically and communally loaded terminology into the wider discourse on Kashmir. Its assertion to ‘reconquer Kashmir’ syncs with the RSS’s declared policy of ‘reclaiming Kashmir as a Hindu land’. The changed description of the community from Kashmiri Pandits to Kashmiri Hindus is unmistakably a communally motivated shift. We have already noted (in Chapter 4) that the exclusive use of the term Kashmiri Pandits had its origin in their own demand to impress upon the Mughal rulers their separate identity (and possibly loyalty) from the rest of Hindus under their rule outside Kashmir and at the same time satisfy their ego of belonging to an exceptional and the highest caste among all castes of Hindus of India. They retained and cherished this exclusivist identity all through the centuries when Kashmir passed through Muslim, Sikh and Hindu rule. However, by merging the community’s identity with the rest of Hindus now, Panun Kashmir wants to tap sentiments and support of the Hindu masses of India.

The history of Kashmir all but agrees with the Kashmiri Pandits being a persecuted community since the advent of Islam in Kashmir. Notwithstanding what the community leaders might say, the Pandits were never out of power irrespective of who (Shahmirs, Mughals, Afghans, Sikhs or Dogras) were the rulers. As to Panun Kashmir’s claim that the community was “facing and fighting communalism and fundamentalism since the dawn of freedom (1947)” and it will not return to “the servitude of a Muslim State,” the reality perhaps lies in the hugely disproportionate number of high positions in civil and police administration Hindus occupied in the Muslim-majority State during the pre-1947 times. The situation, one might add, has not changed much since the “dawn of freedom.”

Pitching for a separate homeland, leaders of the Pandit community allege that over the centuries, their number was on decline owing to

periodic forced migration. The Muslim rule in Kashmir ended in 1819 AD, but what one infers from the community literature is that the forced migration did not stop with that. One is given to understand that if it were Muslim rulers who earlier forced the Pandits to flee from Kashmir, the Muslim population continued it thereafter. Statistics on the population of the Kashmiri Pandits over a long period, however, present a different scenario. The Dogra rule is marked by holding of periodic censuses that provide an earliest insight into the total population of Kashmir and its religious texture. The first such known exercise was undertaken in 1873, and it calculated the total population of Kashmir province at 491,846.⁴⁹ Importantly, during the Dogra rule, Kashmir province comprised (a) Kashmir North, including Uttarmachhipora tehsil, Baramulla tehsil, Sri Pratap Singhpora tehsil (b) Kashmir South, including Tehsil Khas, Awantipora tehsil, Kulgam tehsil, Anantnag tehsil and (c) Muzaffarabad District, including Karnah tehsil, Uri tehsil and Muzaffarabad tehsil, now a part of Pakistan Administered Kashmir. The census of 1873 did not give religion-wise breakup of the population. However, the first "accurate"⁵⁰ census was held in 1891. It calculated the population of Hindus (of all castes) at 6.45 per cent of the total (814,241) population of Kashmir.

The percentage of the Hindu population vis-à-vis the total population of Kashmir recorded in the successive censuses of 1901, 1911, 1921, 1931 and 1941 stood at 5.71 (1,157,394), 4.8 (1,295,363), 4.31 (1,497,086), 4.38 (1,569,218) and 4.91 (1,728,705), respectively. It has to be borne in mind that the population of Hindus reflected in these censuses includes Hindus other than Kashmiri Pandits, especially Jammu Dogras and Punjabi traders. As such, it is difficult to have the exact number or percentage of the population of Kashmiri Pandits out of the total Hindu population of Kashmir. However, the Census of 1921 under the caste-wise breakup of literacy gives the total number of Kashmiri Pandits at 55,052. That means the community constituted 3.67 per cent of the total population of Kashmir in 1921. Now, if we look at the post-1947 scenario, we have the last census conducted in Kashmir, prior to the Pandit migration, in 1981 that calculated the total population of Hindus as 124,078 or 3.96 per cent out of the total population of 3,134,904. That is almost the same percentage

or precisely 0.29 per cent more than what it was in 1921. Even the 1941 Census data suggests a similar percentage for the Kashmiri Pandit population. Of the total population of 1,728,705 for the Kashmir province then, there were 85,538 Hindus, which included 5,846 Hindus of Muzaffarabad and 42 Scheduled Castes. Subtracting this number from the total Hindu population, we get the number of 79,692 including non-Kashmiri Hindus in the Valley. This works out to be 4.6 per cent of the total population. Subtract other Hindus in the Kashmir Valley, the percentage of Kashmiri Pandits again works out to be about 4 per cent. Based on this, if we subtract the population of non-Kashmiri Hindus from the census figures of 1901, 1911 and 1931 then the percentage of Kashmiri Pandit population vis-à-vis Kashmir's total population would be about 4 per cent.

In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, we can possibly take this 4 per cent figure safely down to the beginning of the non-Muslim rule in 1819. This means that the community has retained the near 4 per cent share in total population of Kashmir at least through the last 160 years, if not more, notwithstanding the chest-beating about the alleged pre- and post-1947 (prior to 1990) persecution/shrinking of employment opportunities and resultant migrations. This is the period when allegations of persecution of the community, forcible conversion to Islam or forced eviction from Kashmir cannot stand as there were no Muslim kings around to do all this and as the Kashmiri Pandits themselves exercised real power. The allegations of persecution and discrimination during the post-1947 in the so-called Muslim State also betray the propaganda. In the words of Pradeep Magazine, the Pandit narratives, like the 'tunnel-vision perspective', recognizes only Kashmiri Brahmins as the rightful inhabitants of Kashmir and the Muslims as usurpers who, through forcible conversions, reduced them to a minority and eventually chased them out.⁵¹ "In this discourse there is no place for anyone other than a 'pure, enlightened Brahmin self'."⁵²

The allegations of constant persecution and discrimination can be analysed better through facts and figures indicative of the status and privileges the Kashmiri Pandits enjoyed during and after the Muslim rule in Kashmir. The statistics mock at Panun Kashmir's designation of Kashmir as the 'Muslim State' in whose servitude the Pandits would

not like to go. Although ‘elected’ governments have been in place from time to time in the Muslim majority Jammu and Kashmir since 1947, with always a Muslim Chief Minister as its head, it would be outlandish to dub it as a Muslim State. Conversely, all governors or heads of the State have been Hindus. How powerful the Chief Minister of the state is has been on display time and again. Often, their proposals are consigned to the dustbins by the federal government in New Delhi, which has appropriated even a District Magistrate’s authority to relax curfew in Kashmir. During the prolonged curfew⁵³ in 2016, the paramilitary CRPF refused to honour curfew passes issued by District Magistrates and told people to get “real curfew passes from [the] Government of India.”⁵⁴ On the eve of the annual Muslim festival of Eid-ul-Adha, which fell on 13 September 2016, the Government of India instructed the State Government to “impose restrictions on the movement of people,”⁵⁵ a decision that a District Magistrate is supposed to take at the local level. Such incidents have often earned ridicule for a Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. The federal government, at least twice in the past, has publicly undermined the authority of the State Government and the legislature it draws its powers from when it first rejected the Resettlement Act⁵⁶ and then the Autonomy Resolution⁵⁷ passed by the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, theoretically, the second most powerful legislature in India after the Parliament. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, who was regarded by his people as the ‘Lion of Kashmir’ was so frustrated with the interference of the Indian intelligence agencies that he once told journalist Kuldip Nayyar that “They treat me like a *chaprasi* (peon).”⁵⁸

How much New Delhi regards the opinion of an ‘elected’ Chief Minister of Kashmir is disclosed by Amarjit Singh Dulat, who was asked by the then Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Vajpayee to convey to an unwilling Farooq Abdullah that “if he’s not willing to cooperate then we have our own ways of doing it.”⁵⁹ Abdullah, the then Chief Minister, had disagreed with the Prime Minister’s Office over placing Jammu and Kashmir under the Governor’s rule before the 2002 State Assembly Elections. Dulat has also removed the fig leaf cover from—what in any case is firmly held public view in Kashmir—the real power that decides on who should be the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir.⁶⁰ Prominent legal expert and author,

A. G. Noorani's comment on Dulat's book, *Kashmir: The Vajpayee Years*, sums it up well:

The book reveals all too clearly how in Jammu and Kashmir the intelligence agencies subverted the democratic process with intrigue and the electoral process with bribery, and debased the quality of political life. This book reveals all too clearly that India will continue to rig elections to the Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir for as long as the Kashmir dispute is not settled with Pakistan with the consent of the people of the State. Until then, it will arrange matters to ensure two things. First, that no one occupies the office of Chief Minister without its approval. The second is commonly overlooked in the entire discourse, namely, that no Legislative Assembly that is likely to cross the well-known red lines set by New Delhi, ever since 1951, gets elected.⁶¹

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah took a long time, and years in jail, to realize and say the obvious when in 1968, he told the Urdu periodical, *Shabistan*: "Only that person who enjoys the confidence of the Government of India can be Chief Minister of Kashmir."⁶² Thirty years later, when his son, Farooq Abdullah, as Chief Minister, announced his support for the newly installed BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government in Delhi, he told media persons that his late father had given him a parting golden advice for remaining in power: "Never be on the opposite side of the ruling party in Delhi." What Abdullahs had learnt after going through rough phases with New Delhi is corroborated by B. K. Nehru, former Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, in his memoirs:

From 1953 to 1975, Chief Ministers of that State [Jammu and Kashmir] had been nominees of Delhi. Their appointment to that post was legitimised by the holding of farcical and totally rigged elections in which the Congress Party led by Delhi's nominee was elected by huge majorities.⁶³

Syed Mir Qasim, who, as Chief Minister, made way for Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah to return to power in 1975 when the latter mended fences with Indira Gandhi, made an identical observation:

"Whenever New Delhi feels a leader in Kashmir is getting too big for his shoes [sic] it employs Machiavellian methods to cut him to size."⁶⁴ If any more evidence was required to establish that the person to be the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir was actually decided by New Delhi rather than the elected members of the State Assembly, Dulat has provided that by claiming that on the behalf of the Government of India, he offered Chief Ministership to separatist leader Shabir Shah. He was also the one who, in 2008, 'foresaw' Omar Abdullah as the next Chief Minister even when his father announced in a late night live NDTV show that he was taking oath as the Chief Minister next morning. Next morning, as we all know, Omar, not Farooq, was administered oath of office of Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir by the Governor Narinder Nath Vohra.

Now, let's take a look at the complexion of bureaucracy and law and order machinery of this 'Muslim State'. Muslims are virtually absent from the policy-making positions and senior echelons of civil and police administration. Before looking at the present scenario, let us first have an idea of the Hindu and Muslim representation in the administration under a Hindu Maharaja's rule. In 1924, when the then Viceroy of India, Lord Reading, visited Kashmir, the marginalized Muslims were successful in presenting a memorandum to him while he was at a shop to see local handicrafts. The memorandum, among other injustices meted out to the majority community, apprised him about the discrimination against Muslims in government service where there were only 55 Muslim gazetted officers in comparison to 421 non-Muslims.⁶⁵ In 1931, of the total 558 gazetted positions, Hindus held 361 and Muslims 163. The remaining 34 were shared by Sikhs and others. Out of the total 15,429 non-gazetted jobs, Hindus had 9,281 and Muslims 4,943. Sikhs and others got the remaining 1,205. Thus, Hindus held 64.69 per cent from the gazetted and 60.15 per cent from the non-gazetted share in employment, while the majority community got only 29.21 per cent and 32.04 per cent share, respectively in the two categories.⁶⁶ Not to talk of Kashmir alone, 94 per cent of *patwaris* in Mirpur tehsil were Kashmiri Pandits.⁶⁷ The department-wise share in government jobs of non-Muslims and Muslims in 1930–31 was overwhelmingly tilted towards Hindus. In the departments of forest, customs, education, judiciary, health, revenue, treasury and police,

out of the total 2,416 employees, non-Muslims accounted for 1,547 or 64 per cent. The highest number of Muslim representation was in the police department, where out of 1,465 employees, 662 were Muslims of which 650 were from constabulary alone. The lowest Muslim representation was in the departments of forests and judiciary where 4 Muslim employees each were on the payrolls compared to 120 and 33 non-Muslims, respectively. The customs department had 9 Muslim employees, education 6, health 32, revenue 35 and treasury 13 in comparison to 150, 56, 188, 113 and 188 non-Muslim employees, respectively.⁶⁸ The Dogra administration was predominantly manned by non-Muslims and “the share of Kashmiri Pandits was not insignificant.”⁶⁹

A decade after the Glancy Commission endorsed grievances of the Muslims and recommended remedial steps, the situation remained unchanged as is evident from the statistics of 1941. In 1931, the Council of Ministers comprised five ministers, including the Prime Minister, and only one, a non-state subject, was a Muslim. In 1941, the situation was the same with different incumbents. No Muslim from the State, let alone Kashmir, was among the ministers, while a Kashmiri Pandit figured as minister each time. The governors of both Kashmir and Jammu were non-Muslims. In fact, during the period of Maharaja Hari Singh (1925–47), two Kashmiri Pandits, Hari Kishen Koul and Ram Chandra Kak, were appointed as Prime Minister, while no Muslim ever held this position during the 100-year-long (1819–1947) Dogra rule. In 1941, of the total 16 state-level heads of various departments, only 4 were Muslims.

At the provincial level, among the officers of the ranks of sessions judges, senior superintendents of police, conservators of forest, chief medical officers and inspectors of schools, only one senior superintendent of police and an inspector of schools were Muslims.⁷⁰ The education department continued to have Hindu preponderance in a State with 78 per cent Muslim population. As much as 74.5 per cent staff, including director education, principals, professors and lecturers, was non-Muslims. They also accounted for 65 per cent of inspectors of schools, assistant inspectors of schools and adult education officers, 69 per cent of the clerical staff of the director of education, 49 per cent of the clerical staff of the two colleges, 62 per cent of the clerical

staff of the offices of the inspectors of schools, 56 per cent of teachers of different grades, 53 per cent of the class IV staff, 51 per cent of the staff of women education wing and 70 per cent of the staff of technical education.⁷¹ The Srinagar Municipal Committee represented another instance of gross discrimination against the Muslims. Of the total 84 posts, Muslims held only 22, including 1 of the 4 gazetted positions. The president, health officer, engineer, prosecutor, special officers, head clerk, overseers, draftsman and head vaccinator were all Hindus.⁷²

If, and when, a qualified and deserving Muslim was appointed, especially on a senior position, the Pandit community would literally rise in revolt. On the appointment of two eminent educationists, Khwaja Ghulam Saiyidain and Dr Muhammad Din Taseer, as Director of Education and Principal of Sri Pratap College, Srinagar, respectively, the Pandits raised a hue and cry. The opposition to their appointment was purely communal as their qualifications were unrivalled. Saiyidain's reputation as an educationist and thinker was well established. He authored several books on Indian culture and education and later rose to the position of Secretary to Government of India, Department of Education. In 1967, he was awarded the third highest Indian civilian award, Padma Bhushan, for his contribution to education sector. Taseer too was a person of no ordinary achievement. He was a poet, writer and literary critic. He had double masters from the Punjab University and the Cambridge University and doctorate from the Cambridge University, and was Principal of Islamia College, Lahore, before he came to Kashmir. He was known to be the first person from the Subcontinent to have obtained a PhD in English literature in England.

The *Martand*, a Kashmiri Pandit community newspaper, ran a smear campaign against Saiyidain and Taseer. The newspaper objected on their being non-state subjects, although several Hindu officers from outside Jammu and Kashmir were then, as earlier, heading different State departments. Incidentally, during the same year, non-state subject Hindus were appointed as Director of Industries, chief engineer, electricity, and auditor general, and the *Martand* had no problem with them.⁷³ Saiyidain's pioneering contribution to the development of education in Jammu and Kashmir has been widely recognized and his secular credentials were never questioned, but the *Martand* indulged in

a communal propaganda against him through a series of 25 articles.⁷⁴ He was slammed for posting highly qualified Muslims like G. A. Mukhtar, Abdul Aziz and Molvi Muhammad Hussain as headmaster of training school, assistant inspector of schools and adult education officer, respectively⁷⁵ against their less-qualified Hindu colleagues as these positions were considered exclusively reserved for the Hindus. The *Martand*'s case against Saiyidain included allegations as trivial as display of pictures of noted educationist Dr Zakir Hussain and poet of repute Altaf Hussain Hali in the Teachers' Training School, while no such objection was raised on photographs of Rabindra Nath Tagore and Brij Narayan Chakbast, the two noted poets, displayed at the same place.⁷⁶ The State Publicity Department was constrained to admonish the Editor *Martand* for his smear campaign against Saiyidain, declaring that the allegations against the Director of Education were "not true."⁷⁷ The unsubstantiated anti-Saiyidain campaign launched by the newspaper ruffled feathers of even the Hindu subjects of Hari Singh. The *Amar*, in an editorial piece, strongly criticized the *Martand* for its propaganda campaign against Saiyidain, accusing the newspaper of injuring common interests of people for its vested community interests. The editorial observed:

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Under the above caption, a series [of articles] was published in the *Martand*. We carefully read and weighed these in the light of facts and reached to the conclusion that this propaganda is driven by vested interests alone. Neither is it related with facts nor is any national interest associated with it. We do not claim that the Director Education is a perfect human being or the only educationist but the fact cannot be denied that Khwaja Sahab's selection is the best among all those who have held this post till date. ... Introduction of adult education in the State, establishment of basic schools, pleasant changes in the education system, etc. are the creation of Khwaja Sahab's fertile mind. These initiatives are the real guarantors of public welfare. Notwithstanding this, the pointless propaganda launched against him shows that Director Sahab has been unable to meet the wishes of that special community which the *Martand* proudly represents. So far as truth is concerned the opponents have published advertisements [against Saiyiddain] in newspapers but could not produce single solid evidence in their support....

Surely, this attitude brings shame to journalism in the State. We deem it prudent to extend a friendly advice to the Editor *Martand* to realise his responsibilities and desist from sacrificing common educational interests for personal or community interests.⁷⁸

What lay behind the attack on Taseer was that his appointment disturbed the applecart of three Kashmiri Pandit aspirants, professors Radha Krishen Bhan, Brij Krishen Madan and Ram Chand Pandita, who were eying this post, although none of them stood anywhere near the qualification, experience and intellectual standing of the former. On the appointment of Dr Taseer, the *Martand* predicted that the new Principal would be greeted with black flags and protest.⁷⁹ The newspaper virtually instigated students against Taseer by publishing the news report anticipating their resentment on the "appointment of a non-state subject as Principal."⁸⁰ The *Martand*'s assault on Taseer was patently communal so much so that Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah came out openly against the newspaper. In a public meeting held in Srinagar on 19 September 1941, Abdullah said

Newspapers and representatives of Kashmiri Pandits have poisoned the atmosphere by attacking the person of Principal Taseer. By launching personal attacks they have severely damaged a venerable and just principle. Non-state subjects have been appointed on various posts so far. One could understand the current opposition had these friends raised similar objection or even one-tenth of it on such occasions. Unfortunately, however, on the arrival of Rai Bahadur Ram Lal from outside as Director Industries old experienced hands like Pandit L. Zutshi and Mr. Kohli were deprived of their right; Mr. Naraian's arrival as Chief Engineer Electricity denied competent Hindu and Muslim engineers in the department what could have accrued to them; Mr. Nehru, whom I hold in esteem, came here as Accountant General and Pandit Parmanand's right was taken away. Moreover, if the Director Hospitals had not come from outside the post would have gone to Dr. Gwasha Lal or Vaishnavi or any other doctor from the State. Continuous import of people from outside [to man different posts] deprived locals of their right but these people [who oppose appointment

of Saiyidain and Taseer] did not care. Perhaps they were satisfied that these appointments were adding to their numbers. It is logical to conclude that their current opposition is due to something else than what meets the eye. Likewise, a Pandit daily, *Martand*, indulged in mudslinging against Director Education through a series of 24–25 articles. This also forces people to think that this organ of the Kashmiri Pandits is driven by sheer communalism and personal vilification. My advice to him [Editor] is to forthwith restrain from personal attacks.⁸¹

With such depressing scenario obtaining from various departments of the *Maharaja's* Government, the British Government in Delhi was no less biased against Kashmiri Muslims in matters of recruitment. The Department of Posts and Telegraph starkly represented this discrimination. From the seniormost position of Superintendent of Post Offices, Kashmir, down to head clerk, there was only one Muslim—a head clerk. The superintendent of post offices, postmaster, deputy postmaster, supervisor post offices, supervisor telegraph branch, subdivisional inspector, engineering supervisor and town inspector, none represented the Muslim community. Among 111 clerks, only 22 were Muslims.⁸² Under the Dogra rule, Walter Lawrence found

Few Pandits who were not in the receipt of pay from the State and the number of offices was legion. But though this generosity in the matter of official establishment was an enormous boon to the Pandit class, it was a curse and misfortune to the Musalmans of Kashmir, for the Pandit does not value the post for its pay, but rather for its prerequisites, and every post in the valley was quickly made a source of prerequisites.⁸³

Post-1947, when Dogra autocracy was dislodged, the situation remained tilted against the Muslims. In 1967, out of the total 2,252 gazetted officers in Jammu and Kashmir, only 924 were Muslims who comprised 68 per cent of the total population of the State.⁸⁴ In 1987, there were only 5 Muslim administrative secretaries in the Civil Secretariat out of a total of 22. In the Central Government offices located in the State, the Muslims comprised 6.8 per cent officers, 13 per cent clerical staff and 15 per cent class fourth employees. The percentage of Muslim officers in the nationalized banks was a mere 1.5 per cent. Of the 222 doctors working

in various departments of the two Government Medical Colleges, only 78 were Muslims.⁸⁵ Forty-four years after the installation of the ‘democratic rule’ in Jammu and Kashmir, the situation for the majority community was no better as far as the government services were concerned.

Apart from the dismal representation of Muslims in government offices, one of the stark realities was the complete ‘easing out’ of the majority community from the top civil and police administration of the state. There are only two Muslim officers from the state (an additional chief secretary and a commissioner/secretary, who is due to retire this year) in the entire administrative set up, comprising, besides the governor, three advisors, a chief secretary, a financial commissioner (with chief secretary rank), five additional chief secretaries, 15 commissioners/secretaries, two divisional commissioners, two director generals (police and prisons), one additional director general (police). For this overwhelming presence of non-locals alone, the state administration was likened to the infamous East India Company.⁸⁶

The State Government departments presented a dismal picture. Out of the total 12,323 gazetted officers, Muslims constituted less than half at 41.71 per cent, while in the non-gazetted and lower cadre also their number was “substantially disproportionate to their population.”⁸⁷ The situation in the Government of India offices located in Jammu and Kashmir was far worse. Out of the total number of 1,928 officers, Muslims were only 133.⁸⁸ In the clerical and non-gazetted category, they constituted as little as 12.98 per cent of the total 5,060 employees, while in the class-IV category, there were only 1,212 Muslims out of a total 7,715 employees. In the nationalized banks, the percentage of Muslim officers was as minimal as 1.5 per cent.⁸⁹

There were such Central government offices like the IB and other intelligence agencies where no Muslim was recruited in pursuance of an unwritten law in force since 1947. The secularists in India might hang their heads in shame to know that Muslim auditors in the Accountant General’s office in Srinagar were forbidden from audit inspection of security or intelligence organisations.⁹⁰

The practice remains unchanged.

Is the situation any different now? Statistics as recent as of February 2017 give an idea of Muslim representation in the higher echelons of administration in Jammu and Kashmir. Of the total 84 J&K Cadre IAS officers, only 26 are Muslims.⁹¹ Of these, there is not a single Muslim among the 19 seniormost officers. Among the first 30 IAS officers, only 2 were Muslims and only 12 among the first 51. By June 2023, when Asgar Hussain Samoon, the first of the total 27 Muslim IAS officers, will reach the age of superannuation, 20 others junior to him would have already gone home. The middle rung bureaucracy comprises 514 Kashmir Administrative Service (KAS) officers of whom Muslims at 256 constitute less than 50 per cent.⁹² Over the past several years, the number of Muslims in the Combined Competitive Services (CCS), the feeding cadre to the KAS, is declining. Between 1995 and 2014, the Jammu and Kashmir Public Service Commission made 1,642 selections for the CCS out of which 1,080 (over 65 per cent) were picked up from Jammu and only 538 from Kashmir, besides 24 from Ladakh.⁹³ Figures pertaining to recent years show steady decline in the selection of Muslim candidates. During the year 2011, the Muslim representation in the CCS was 64.48 per cent (253/392) which fell to 55 per cent (77/140) in 2012 (when two selection lists were issued). In 2013, the percentage slightly went up to 59.37 per cent (38/64) but fell to a low of 52.08 (50/96) in 2015. In short, between 2011 and 2015, a sharp fall of 12.46 per cent was recorded in Muslim presence in recruitment to the middle-rung State bureaucracy.⁹⁴ As if that was not enough, the Governor's administration on 31 March 2016 took a decision of far-reaching consequence whereby it decided that the district administration would henceforth be headed only by officers of the IAS, thereby further reducing chances of a local officer to reach a senior bureaucratic position. Jammu and Kashmir has 22 districts that were previously headed also by KAS officers. The State Administrative Council⁹⁵ (SAC), headed by Governor Vohra, reversed the earlier proposal of the Cabinet Subcommittee of the previous government to reserve at least eight posts of Deputy Commissioners for KAS officers. SAC also recommended increase in the cadre strength of IAS from the present 137 to 145,⁹⁶ and "deleted some more posts of HoDs [Heads of Departments] from the KAS Cadre."⁹⁷

So far as the highest bureaucratic position is concerned, the State has had 29 Chief Secretaries since 1949. Of these, only nine were Muslims including six from Jammu and Kashmir; the last was due to retire in November 2015 but had to quit three months earlier for the humiliation of being ignored by the BJP–PDP coalition government in important policy decisions. The officer was the first Muslim to hold the post since 1994. As things stand today, no Muslim of the State, let alone Kashmir, will get to this coveted post in the foreseeable future. The situation in the police administration is worse. As of April 2016, of the total 88 J&K Cadre Indian Police Service (IPS) officers, only 17 are Muslims, none among the first 14 seniormost officers.⁹⁸ Among the 222 State Police Service officers of the rank of Senior Superintendent of Police and Superintendent of Police, only half are Muslims. During the last 102 years for which record is available, out of 34 Police Chiefs in the Muslim majority Jammu and Kashmir, only 2 (Peer Ghulam Hassan Shah and Ghulam Jeelani Pandit) were Muslims whose collective tenure lasted for 6 years 10 months and 15 days. In Ghulam Jeelani Pandit, the State had its last Muslim Police Chief as back as in 1989.

In the case of higher judiciary, ever since it was established in 1928 during the Dogra rule, the Jammu and Kashmir High Court has seen 32 Chief Justices.⁹⁹ Of these, 11 were Muslims, including only 3 (Justice Mian Jal-ud-Din, Justice Mufti Baha-ud-Din and Justice Bashir Ahmad Khan) from Kashmir. Out of the 88 years since the Court came into being, the total tenure of these 3 Chief Justices lasted for 3 years 2 months and 21 days. The period is about one-sixth of the 19 years 8 months and 2 days Justice Janki Nath Wazir, a Rajput Hindu from Jammu, alone held the post from 30 March 1948 to 2 December 1967. The longest term a Kashmiri Muslim has held as Chief Justice is 2 years and the distinction was claimed by Mufti Jalal-ud-Din while Bashir Ahmad Khan's tenure lasted for 2 months and 6 days. Among the 62 judges who have served on the Bench of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court since its inception, Muslims accounted for 24. As of February 2017, there are only two Muslims out of eight sitting judges.¹⁰⁰

An illustration of the Muslim power in Jammu and Kashmir is the manner in which Prime Ministers and Chief Ministers of the State

have been humiliated and cut to size by New Delhi since 1947. The summary dismissals of the State's chief executives of, what Panun Kashmir calls, the Muslim State, and replacing them with hand-picked people has made their authority a laughing stock. In 1953, Kashmir's popular political leader and the then Prime Minister of the State, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, was dismissed and arrested by a 22-year old Hindu Sadr-i-Riyasat on the orders from New Delhi over a frivolous allegation.¹⁰¹ He was replaced by Jawaharlal Nehru's handpicked Bakhshi Ghulam Mohammad. Decades later, when Abdullah returned to power in 1975 after a patch-up with New Delhi, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi berated him and in one of her public speeches at Kathua in Jammu, she "warned him that if she wished she could remove him in a jiffy."¹⁰² In early 1964, when Kashmir had erupted against the mysterious theft of the Holy Relic from Hazratbal Shrine during the intervening night of 26–27 December 1963, Prime Minister Shamsuddin was humiliated by an officer of the Government of India. He was made to wait for 40 minutes outside the State Guest House in Srinagar before granting audience by the visiting Indian Home Secretary, Vishwanathan. The Prime Minister, abandoning protocol, had gone to the Guest House to discuss urgent law and order issues with Vishwanathan.¹⁰³

In 1984, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah's son and the then Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, was sacked through an engineered party coup for antagonizing Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by hosting a conclave of Indian political leaders critical of her in October 1983.¹⁰⁴ He was replaced by his brother-in-law, Ghulam Mohammad Shah, who too was shown the door soon by Indira Gandhi's son and successor, Rajiv Gandhi. Former Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, B. K. Nehru, holds Indira Gandhi's Kashmiri Pandit aide, Makhan Lal Fotedar, squarely responsible for poisoning her ears against Farooq. He recalls that the meeting Indira Gandhi called to decide Farooq's fate was attended, besides Fotedar, by two more Kashmiri Pandits, Tikki Koul and Baboo Haksar, none of whom held any official position. On the other hand, the Governor, the Home Minister, the Home Secretary, the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, the Cabinet Secretary and the Director IB, who had any responsibility for Kashmir, were absent.¹⁰⁵ Indira Gandhi had asked Governor Nehru to

sack Farooq Abdullah that he refused. Recalling the incident, senior journalist M. L. Kotru writes,

When B. K. Nehru, the Governor, refused to do her behest the Prime Minister had little hesitation in ordering a change of occupancy of the Srinagar Raj Bhavan. A more pliant and a hatchet man par excellence, Jagmohan was rushed in to takeover and lo and behold Nehru was out and Jagmohan in as the Governor.¹⁰⁶

Syed Mir Qasim once recalled in a private conversation that as Chief Minister he had almost lost his job on the complaint of an estranged Kashmiri Pandit colleague. Sham Lal Saraf had reported to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi that the Chief Minister had extended protocol to and hosted at his official residence an intelligence officer from Pakistan. Gandhi was enraged and had conveyed to Qasim her anger through an aide. The fact of the matter was that a female cousin of the Chief Minister had arrived from Pakistan in connection with settling a family property issue with him. Qasim had arranged picking her up in an official vehicle at the Delhi airport and during her stay in Srinagar, the lady had put up with her cousin who happened to be the Chief Minister. Qasim refused to speak to Gandhi when her aide suggested that he should directly talk to the Madam and clarify. However, the Prime Minister on her own phoned to mollify Qasim and advised him to keep Saraf busy with some work so that he had no time to make such complaints.

Apart from dismissing chief ministers, New Delhi has been accused of rigging almost all the assembly elections held so far in Jammu and Kashmir to install acquiescent chief ministers. This is how political analyst Happymon Jacob puts it:

Successive regimes in New Delhi rigged elections in J&K, time and again, jailed many Kashmiri leaders, installed puppet regimes in Srinagar, floated all sorts of political and other outfits in the State in order to outwit the existing ones only to float newer ones to outsmart the ones floated earlier, violated human rights of Kashmiris, and killed hundreds of people in cold blood—all in the name of ‘national interest’. New Delhi and the Congress Party in particular, believed, perhaps even ‘genuinely’, that given

the history of Jammu and Kashmir and its proximity to Pakistan, it had to keep a tab on the political activities there and even try and manipulate it so that Kashmir remains with India. But then, even genuine criminality is not absolvable [sic].¹⁰⁷

India's former spymaster, Amarjit Singh Dulat, has simplified for us the appreciation of the status of Kashmir and its successive 'elected' governments by confirming the long held public belief that Kashmir, for all practical purposes, was run by IB. It is an open secret in Kashmir that topmost civil and police postings in the State are 'dictated' by New Delhi. In 2005, the then Chief Minister drew flak for being helpless in shifting an inspector general of police whom he wanted to transfer. Years later, when he returned to the post, he confided in a local journalist that he wanted to shift his Principal Secretary, but New Delhi wanted the officer to continue at his present position.

Kashmir must be the only 'Muslim State' with permanently a Hindu Head of the State and where the punishment for cow slaughter is harsher than in any state of India, and where there is free flow of liquor as against the Hindu Gujarat.

So far as the separate homeland for Kashmiri Pandits is concerned, statistics and historical facts appear to be of no importance for those who put forward reasons for its creation. The number of '700,000 migrant Kashmiri Pandits' sought to be resettled in Kashmir, besides being fraught with severe demographic consequences, is 5.6 times more than about 125,000 Pandits who actually migrated from the Valley in 1990. Obviously, the figure of 0.7 million includes tens of thousands of Kashmiri-origin Pandits like the Nehrus, the Katjus, the Haksars and so on, whose ancestors had moved out of Kashmir in search of greener pastures during different periods of its medieval history. According to the community narrative, these Pandits came to the plains of India in order to preserve their religious identity, which was not possible for them to retain in Kashmir. However, having migrated in groups, "these Pandits maintained their group identity.... In course of time their Bachbhats, Priests and Purohits also followed them and migrated from Kashmir and settled in Agra and Delhi."¹⁰⁸ The migrating Kashmiri Brahmins chose to settle "in the Mughal capitals of Agra and Delhi than in the sacred cities of Varanasi and Prayag,"¹⁰⁹ and also preferred Persian over Sanskrit, the *devabhasha*

and the language of their scriptures, which they soon forgot. Sender talks about the migrant Pandits who selected sacred places as their settling points, when possible, “swiftly abandoned the mandir for the *darbar*.¹¹⁰ She quotes the instance of one Kishen Das who went from the temple along the Ganges to the fort along the Jamuna and ended up at the Mughal court. Sender is of the view that the cause of the Pandit migration was opportunity rather than oppression:

Community legends attribute the departure of the Pandits from the valley to persecution, whatever the time it occurred. However, the actual history of the few families for whom information can be found suggests instead that immigration to the plains was stimulated, for the most part, by contacts made in the course of imperial travels in Kashmir. Opportunity rather than oppression provided the impetus for migration; where there was negative element, it stemmed from personal disputes or natural disasters rather than systematic persecution.¹¹¹

“Only a few [Kashmiri Pandit] families,” writes Sender, “settled permanently in Banaras and those located in Faizabad were influenced less by the proximity of Rama’s capital of Ajodhia [Ayodhya] than they were by that of the nawab’s court.”¹¹² It would be interesting to note how a non-Kashmiri speaking Kashmiri Pandit, whose ancestors had moved out of Kashmir some 200 years back, views the migration of his fellow Pandits from the Valley. Markanday Katju’s, former judge of the Supreme Court of India, ancestor, Mansa Ram Katju, had migrated after obtaining job in the court of the Nawab of Jaora in Western Madhya Pradesh. In his words:

There are two kinds of Kashmiri Pandits, the Kashmiri speaking ones, and the non-Kashmiri speaking ones. The non-Kashmiri speaking Kashmiri Pandits (like myself) are those whose ancestors had migrated from Kashmir valley about 200 years back. These Kashmiri Pandits all migrated in exactly the same way, that is, they got employment in some princely state, i.e. in the Court of some Maharaja or Nawab (they got such jobs as Kashmiri Pandits were highly proficient in Urdu and Persian, the Court languages). The ancestors of Pt. Nehru, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, etc. had all come from Kashmir in this way. Having left

Kashmir, they forgot the Kashmiri language after about two generations, and now know only Hindi and English (those up to my father's generation were highly proficient in Urdu, but those in my generation have forgotten it.) My estimate is that they are between one and two lacs in number. My own ancestor, Pt. Mansa Ram Katju migrated from Kashmir about 200 years ago and got service in the Court of the Nawab of Jaora. Jaora is a town in Ratlam district in western Madhya Pradesh, on the border of Rajasthan. My family lived in Jaora for several generations until my grandfather Dr. K. N. Katju moved to U.P. and settled in Allahabad. These non-Kashmiri speaking Kashmiris, like my family, did not migrate from Kashmir because of persecution but because of job opportunities in the plains. My ancestor Pt. Mansa Ram Katju, who migrated from Kashmir about 200 years ago has written in Persian in the register of the *Panda* of Kurukshetra 'batalash-e-maash aamadaam' which means 'I have come in quest of bread' (i.e. job).¹¹³

While these career-seekers are also presented as forcibly driven out Kashmiri Pandits reserving their right to return, there is no mention of tens of thousands of Muslims who were forced to leave the Valley due to the oppressive and brazenly anti-Muslim policies of the Sikh and Hindu rulers of Kashmir between 1819 and 1947. As we have observed (in Chapter 4), 111,775 such unfortunate Kashmiri Muslims had escaped to Punjab by 1891. Their descendants' right to return is not a part of the Pandits' migration narrative. Also, the return of hundreds of Muslim families who were pushed across the Line of Control by a vindictive government in Kashmir in 1947 and later, or those who crossed over to other side of the Line of Control for safety during different wars between India and Pakistan and armed conflict in Kashmir, are not talked about. Nor is the resettlement of the hundreds of thousands of Muslims of Jammu, who were driven out of the State by the Hindu Maharaja's forces and murderous groups in 1947, a subject that warrants a serious discussion. The number of such uprooted Muslims who reached Pakistan after crossing the rivers of blood and mayhem ranged between 500,000 and 600,000,¹¹⁴ while 237,000 of their kith and kin were massacred in different parts of Jammu province.¹¹⁵

The politics of separate homeland is also manifested through contempt towards the struggle of Kashmiri Muslims for their political rights. The Pandit leadership categorizes its peaceful struggle for minimum basic rights under an oppressive Dogra rule as a “war against the Kashmiri Pandits, the civilization anchors of the Vedic Indian nation.”¹¹⁶ It is a different matter that while claiming to be the civilization anchors of Vedic India, Panun Kashmir is yet to firm up its opinion on whether the community is a “part of the Vedic heartland of India” or “almost contemporary to the Vedic civilization of India.” In the fourth paragraph of the *margdarshan* resolution of 1991, the organization talks about the Kashmiri Hindus as “a part of the Vedic heartland of India” while in the very next sentence, it describes their history as “almost contemporary to the Vedic civilization of India.”¹¹⁷ Anyhow, we have already observed (in Chapter 5), the Pandit leadership in 1931 tried to communalize the post 13 July 1931 situation and sabotage the Hindu Maharaja’s announcement of nominal concessions for his Muslim subjects. The day, observed by the Kashmiri Muslims as the Martyrs’ Day, is denigrated by Panun Kashmir as the ‘Black Day’, demanding that the Jammu and Kashmir Government stop observing a holiday on 13 July to commemorate the happening.¹¹⁸ Again, for the organization, the peaceful 20-year long Plebiscite Movement launched by Kashmiri Muslims during 1960s and 1970s for the fulfilment of India’s pledges to hold a referendum in Kashmir is a “secessionist movement carried on by the fundamentalist forces.” Interestingly, the movement was mentored by and drew inspiration from secularist Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah who rejected Muhammad Ali Jinnah’s two-nation theory and merger of Kashmir with Pakistan based on the religion of its majority population. Likewise, the political movement supported by armed men in 1989 to seek an end to the Indian rule is “a Muslim religious crusade.” The armed struggle was launched by a secular JKLF but was later joined by some religiously driven armed groups as well. The political face of the movement, however, remains the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, an amalgam of more than a dozen political groups, that later split into two factions.

Whatever be the politics behind the demand for a separate homeland for Pandits within Kashmir, its creation would be “nothing less than religious apartheid.”¹¹⁹ The common perception among Muslims

in Kashmir is that there is a pattern to the synthetic allegations by Panun Kashmir against the Muslims of Kashmir, coupled with misrepresentation of history and the vehement support they are getting from the RSS and its various offshoots, including the ruling BJP. They see it as a ‘sinister plan’ directed at creating another Palestine in this part of the world. Uprooting millions of Muslims from their native land, which is inherent in the creation of an exclusive Hindu homeland, is akin to what Zionists did to Palestinians in 1947–48. The creation of exclusive Hindu settlements, as is proposed by the BJP Government, would be copying what the Zionist Israeli regime has been doing in the West Bank—piece by piece, but progressively, claiming and occupying more and more territory through new settlements, security campuses, exclusive roads and so on. In the absence of Article 370 that prohibits settlement of non-state subjects in Kashmir, the separate homeland or settlements will be open for non-Kashmiri Hindus, like Israeli settlements in the West Bank are open for Jews from anywhere in the world. Either of the plans suits the RSS as long as it de-Islamizes Kashmir and reclaims it as ‘the Hindu land’.¹²⁰

Separate homeland or separate settlements, proponents of both, like Zionists, have no consideration for the fact that Muslims proposed to be displaced are natives to the land whom they acknowledge as, once upon a time in the past, their co-religionists with a common history. An exclusive homeland or settlement for Kashmiri Hindus, viewed in historical perspective, is an endorsement, though belated, of the Muslim League’s demand for the religion-based separate homeland (Pakistan) that, history bears witness, was out rightly rejected by both the Kashmiri Hindus and the RSS. In fact, it is no secret that Mahatma Gandhi was made to pay with his life for conceding to the Muslim League’s demands. It does not end there. It has dangerous, indeed poisonous, future implication. In the heat of the most parochial blindness, both the demand for homeland and the plan for separate settlements overlook the precedent it would potentially create for the Muslims who are of late increasingly being displaced through orchestrated communal riots by right wing Hindu mobs in India.

The right wing leadership of the Kashmiri Pandits is seen increasingly allowing itself to be used by the Hindutva forces of India, who have no respect for truth while talking about Kashmir or its majority

community. However, the saner elements among the Pandits recognize the dangers in their community serving as a wedge for the RSS. The Pandits who stayed back in Kashmir feel that Panun Kashmir “is under the influence of pro-Hindutva political groups.”¹²¹ They do not share the migration narrative of their brethren who left Kashmir in 1990 and also oppose the demand for a separate homeland for the community. Nitasha Koul¹²² views the migrant Kashmiri Pandits as “a pawn in the hands of the Hindutva ideologues who use the Pandit issue to bash and demonise Kashmiri Muslims.” According to her, what Hindutva forces saw as the inherently traitorous nature of Kashmiri Muslims *qua* Muslims was more problematic than even a Muslim majoritarian state such as a clearly ‘Islamic’ Republic of Pakistan.¹²³

Notes and References

1. The organization has since split into three factions, two of which have lately sorted out their differences but retained their separate identities.
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4. Article 370 of the Indian Constitution guarantees special status to Jammu and Kashmir where non-state subjects cannot acquire property and settle.
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24. *Kashmir Reader*, 16 August 2015.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ibid., 2 September 2015.
29. *The Economic Times*, 11 May 2016.
30. Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti's PDP fought the State Assembly elections in 2014 on the plank of keeping BJP out of power but, after the elections threw up a hung assembly, joined hands with it to form a coalition government. For this, Syeed was accused of 'sell out of Kashmir'.
31. Professor Showkat Hussain, *Kashmir Reader*, 2 September 2015.
32. Professor Noor Ahmad Baba, *Kashmir Reader*, 2 September 2015.
33. Shakeel Qalandar, *Kashmir Reader*, 2 September 2015.
34. *Greater Kashmir*, 8 May 2016.
35. *The Indian Express*, 7 February 2017.
36. Available at <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-omar-abdullah-warns-against-ghettoisation-of-kashmiri-pandits-2075802>
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Wani, *Tehelka.com*, 2 July 2012. <http://www.tehelka.com/sas-geelani-opposes-separate-settlement-for-kashmiri-pandits/>
40. Ibid.
41. PTI, 6 July 2015. Along with Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Mukherjee is considered the godfather of Hindu nationalism in India, especially the Hindutva movement. He died as a prisoner in Jammu and Kashmir in 1953 where he had gone to agitate against the special constitutional status enjoyed by the State.
42. Basharat Masood, *The Indian Express*, 29 May 2016.
43. Ibid.
44. *Greater Kashmir*, 8 June 2016.
45. Ibid. Tihar Jail is the largest prison complex in South Asia, located in New Delhi.

46. *Greater Kashmir*, 9 June 2016.
47. OneIndia, 29 April 2015. <http://newsr.in/n/India/754zv293/Kashmiri-Pandits-rehabilitation-only-possible-if-homeland-is.html>
48. Ibid.
49. In 1868, a census was taken of the population of Srinagar, but its accuracy was doubted (Lawrence).
50. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 224.
51. Pradeep Magazine, *The Hindu* [Debate], 8 February 2013.
52. Ibid.
53. The first relaxation of round-the-clock curfew was announced after 51 days. However, it was soon reimposed.
54. *Greater Kashmir*, 20 August 2016.
55. *The Hindu* online, 9 September 2016. <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/centre-asks-jk-to-impose-section-144-during-eidulazha/article9091172.ece>
56. The operation of the Resettlement Act was stayed by the Supreme Court of India in 2002 on a petition filed by Jammu and Kashmir Panthers Party leader, Bhim Singh, who had pleaded that the Act would become a tool for the entry “of terrorists” into the State and the implementation of the Act would threaten the unity and integrity of the State. The Government of India while disposing before the Apex Court shared Singh’s “apprehensions”. Earlier, in 2001 the Supreme Court had “respectfully” returned a Presidential reference on the Act saying it was inexpedient for the Court to answer the questions posed in the reference. The Bill was twice passed by the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly and also assented to by the Governor.
57. In 2000, Jammu and Kashmir Assembly passed with two-thirds majority a resolution demanding restoration of autonomy for the State guaranteed under the Indian Constitution but which had been eroded over a period of time since 1964. The resolution was summarily rejected by the federal government in Delhi without even discussing it with the State Government.
58. Professor Gull Wani, *Greater Kashmir*, 24 July 2016.
59. Dulat, *Kashmir: The Vajpayee Years*, 237.
60. Ibid., 236–37.
61. A. G. Noorani, “India’s Failure in Kashmir,” *Frontline*, 7 August 2015.
62. *Shabistan*, January 1968.
63. Nehru, *Nice Guys Finish Second*, 686.
64. Quoted by Nehru, *Nice Guys Finish Second*, 484.
65. Hussain, *The Wounded Paradise*, 111.
66. Ministry of State Government of India, “Facts about Kashmir,” File No. 8 (25)-K/49, 4.
67. Report by Major General, Finlayson, G.O.C., Mirpur, dated 17 February 1932, Political Department, File No.1/29/870, 1932, JKA-J.
68. Khan, *Freedom Movement in Kashmir* (1931–1940), 120.
69. Ibid.
70. *Weekly Khalid*, Kashmir, 11 August 1941.

71. Ibid.
72. Ibid., 10 October 1941.
73. Ibid., 11 September 1941.
74. Ibid., 1 October 1941.
75. *Martand*, 22 August 1941.
76. *Weekly Khalid*, Kashmir, 1 October 1941.
77. Ibid., 17 October 1941.
78. *Amar*, 12 September 1940; reproduced by *Weekly Khalid* on 20 September 1941.
79. *Martand*, 20 September 1941.
80. Ibid.
81. *Weekly Khalid*, Kashmir, 20 September 1941.
82. Ibid., 4 August 1941.
83. Lawrence, *The Valley of Kashmir*, 401.
84. Hussain, *The Wounded Paradise*, 186.
85. Ibid., 192.
86. Khalid Ahmad, "Kashmir: More Sinned Against," *The Illustrated Weekly*, 19–25 October 1991.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid.
89. Ibid.
90. Ibid.
91. List of IAS Officers, Government of Jammu and Kashmir, General Administration Department website (www.jkgad.nic.in), accessed on 15 February 2017.
92. List of KAS Officers, Government of Jammu and Kashmir, General Administration Department website (www.jkgad.nic.in) accessed on 15 February 2017.
93. *Daily State Times*, Jammu, 24 January 2017.
94. No selection was made in 2014.
95. Jammu and Kashmir was placed under the Governor's Rule on 10 January 2016, seventh time since 1947, following the death of Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed. The SAC decision came on a day when it was announced that a new Chief Minister will be sworn in after four days.
96. *Greater Kashmir*, 1 April 2016.
97. Ibid. The KAS Officers Association sharply reacted to slashing the strength of the KAS cadre.
98. Jammu and Kashmir Police official website <http://jkpolice.gov.in/notifications/gradation-list-of-ips-cadre.htm>, accessed on 15 February 2017.
99. Jammu and Kashmir High Court website [www.jkhightcourt.nic.in] accessed on 15 February 2017.
100. Ibid.
101. Abdullah was accused of hobnobbing with the United States for securing independence of Kashmir from Indian rule. The allegation was never established.

102. Ahmad, *My Years with Sheikh Abdullah: Kashmir 1971–1987*, 75.
103. Bhat, *Kashmir 1947 Se 1977 Tak*, 106.
104. Although the Opposition Conclave was the real cause of Indira Gandhi's anger against Farooq, he was accused of anti-national activities and also being behind an ugly incident in which a group of people at the Indira Gandhi's public meeting in Srinagar lifted their *pherans* and exhibited their nakedness.
105. Nehru, *Nice Guys Finish Second*, 709.
106. *Greater Kashmir*, "Making Sense of Power Vacuum," 29 January 2016.
107. Happymon Jacob, *Greater Kashmir*, 11 April 2011.
108. Kilam, *A History of Kashmiri Pandits*, 102.
109. Sender, *The Kashmiri Pandits: A Study of Cultural Choice in North India*, 35.
110. Ibid., 47–48.
111. Ibid., 36.
112. Ibid., 48.
113. Markanday Katju's Facebook post on 7 October 2015. <https://www.facebook.com/justicekatju/posts/1054589161248296>
114. *Dawn*, 2 January 1951; Gurmani, *Kashmir: A Survey*, 7.
115. *The Times of London*, 10 October 1948.
116. *Early Times*, 12 July 2015.
117. Panun Kashmir, Resolution adopted on 28 December 1991 at Jammu. <http://www.panunkashmir.org/margdarshan.html>
118. Chrungoo, Ashwani Kumar, *The Early Times*, 19 June 2015.
119. Trembley, "Nation, Identity and the Intervening Role of the State: A Study of Secessionist Movement in Kashmir."
120. *Organiser*, "Importance of Kashmir," 6 November 1947.
121. Hassan, "Migration of Kashmiri Pandits: Kashmiriyat Challenged?" 8.
122. Nitasha Koul is a novelist and Assistant Professor of Politics and International Relations at Westminster University. For speaking her mind on Kashmir in non-communal terms, Koul was subjected to abuse, slander and wild accusations, including being dubbed as a "representative of the Pakistani Embassy, pro-Jihadi, ISIS supporter and blot on Hinduism." She also received threats of death and legal action. The 'trolls' also called her a prostitute, a whore, daughter of a bitch and a victim of Love Jihad for being on the side of truth. Nitasha Koul, "Kashmiri Pandits Are a Pawn in the Games of Hindutva Forces," *The Wire*, 7 January 2016.
123. Koul, "Kashmiri Pandits Are a Pawn," *The Wire*.

Chapter Nine

Media

There exists in Kashmir a widespread distaste for its portrayal by the ‘fourth pillar’ of the Indian democracy. For many decades now, the mainstream Indian media is blamed for misrepresentation of Kashmir. Talk to anyone in the Valley and he will tell you that the stories to the discredit of Kashmir and its inhabitants are largely a media creation. It is accused of not only generating but also circulating tales of demonization of Kashmir’s majority community, especially after the eruption of militancy and migration of Kashmiri Pandits. Although this negative representation, particularly by the electronic media, was prominently observable post-1989, Kashmir’s experience with partial journalism has rather a long history.

When, in 1904, Munshi Muhammad Din Fauq¹ sought permission to start a newspaper from Srinagar, Pratap Singh, the third-generation Dogra ruler, was not pleased. He asked his Prime Minister to draft rules that would disallow even consideration of such a request in future.² For about three decades, nobody made another attempt until 1932, when a Kashmiri Pandit political activist, Prem Nath Bazaz, was permitted to publish the first newspaper, *Vitasta*, from Kashmir. It lasted less than a year “mainly owing to the hostility of the reactionary [Kashmiri] Hindus who tried to suppress it by every means at their command.”³ Eight years prior to this, Mulk Raj Saraf had been allowed to start from Jammu the *Ranbir*, a weekly named after the predecessor and father of Pratap Singh. Earlier, he had been informed that “Maharaja Bahadur has ordered that no newspaper would be allowed to publish in the State.”⁴ A minister had then intervened and impressed upon the ruler that a newspaper might, in fact, prove helpful for his government. Saraf was asked to write only on matters related with industry, economy, trade and education.⁵ Obviously,

the *Ranbir* could not grow into more than “a supporter of the feudal system and eulogiser of the Maharaja.”⁶

On 13 July 1931, when the Dogra army gunned down 22 civilians in Srinagar and the Muslims launched an agitation to demand basic rights, Kashmir had no newspaper to report the ground situation. The mantle fell on newspapers published from neighbouring Lahore in Punjab. These newspapers were divided into two camps of the ‘Hindu Press’ and the ‘Muslim Press’ on the basis of religion practiced by their owners and their support to politics of the respective community. Newspapers like the *Zamindar*, the *Inqilab*, the *Siyasat*, the *Alfaaz* and the *Lahore Chronicle* formed the ‘Muslim Press’ and took up the cause of Kashmiri masses. At one point in time, these periodicals were banned from the territory of Jammu and Kashmir, although some copies would clandestinely reach Srinagar in the baggage of travellers on the Rawalpindi–Srinagar Road.

On the other hand, newspapers like the *Tribune*, the *Pratap*, the *Milap*, the *Amar* and the *Guru Ghantaal* comprised the ‘Hindu Press’ and took the side of the Maharaja of Kashmir. These newspapers ran a smear campaign against Kashmiri Muslims for asking from their ruler equality before law with the Hindu minority. Justice system was heavily tilted in favour of the ruler’s co-religionist subjects, and the quantum of punishment for a crime was directly related to the faith of the accused. Muslim peasants, 80 per cent of Kashmir’s population, had been dispossessed of their land and converted into beasts of burden, requisitioned, as they were in hordes, for forced unpaid labour. Education and employment were denied to them. Under such oppressive conditions, when they demanded equal treatment with Hindu compatriots, they were seen as conspiring against their ruler. The newspapers also published special ‘Kashmir Numbers’, carrying biased reports and articles demeaning of them and their leaders.

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, in particular, bore the brunt of vilification. In one of its issues, the *Milap*, Lahore, published a slanderous news report, credited to an “informed source,” under the title, “Kashmir’s Bacha Saqa:⁷ Who is Master Abdullah who Started Agitation in Kashmir?” Intriguingly, the story was reproduced verbatim by the *Pratap*, Lahore, the next day albeit with a changed headline,

"The Founder of Kashmir Rebellion: Interesting Antecedents of Master Abdullah." The news report reads:

[He is] an ugly looking person who has spoiled the peaceful atmosphere of Kashmir [and] whose name is Master Abdullah. He shaves his beard and moustache, wears pant and dons a Bacha Saqa style cap. Whether he loves Islam or not is evident from his appearance. It is heard that Master Abdullah resides in Soura (Kashmir). Some say he is the son of a fisherman while some say his father was a darner. After doing M. Sc. from Aligarh he worked as a science teacher in a Kashmir Government High School on a salary of Rs. 80 per month.⁸ Since he was an agitator his stay in Srinagar was not deemed proper so he was transferred to Muzaffarabad. But he refused to go there and the Education Department dismissed him from service for his noncompliance [of orders]. After his dismissal, Master Abdullah started spreading mischief and delivers speeches regularly. Now hardly a day passes when he does not make a speech at one or the other place. His speeches inject poison in Muslims. About his grandfather also it is heard that he was the main leader when the Sunni Muslims looted the Shias. Since Abdullah continues to instigate people there is a rumour that he will be arrested soon. It is reported that he has designated some Jalal as his successor so that the propaganda is continued unabated in his absence.⁹

The *Milap* also published a report about a calendar in circulation in Kashmir, depicting a colour picture of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah in a contemplative mood. The caption of the picture reads: "Kashmiri Gandhi in deep thought about the betterment of Kashmiri Muslims." The newspaper felt uncomfortable with the caption and suggested that the picture should have been appropriately titled as "Bacha Saqa, the destroyer of Kashmir's peace."¹⁰

The spiteful reporting of the events in Kashmir and dubbing the people's movement for basic rights as communal agitation by the 'Hindu Press' left the victims of the Dogra rule and their sympathizers aghast. These newspapers presented affairs of Kashmir in a manner as if Muslims were after the blood of their Hindu ruler and were out to establish Muslim rule in Kashmir. The propaganda had its impact and Sikhs in Punjab pledged support to the Maharaja. The Shiromani

Akali Dal assured him of its help and termed the Kashmir trouble as having been started “only to increase the power of the Muslims.”¹¹ The Akali wrote that “the trouble is led by such people who want to see the establishment of an Islamic State in North India.”¹² On 12 August 1931, the newspaper wrote:

We cannot but advise Maharaja Sahab and Raja Hari Kishen Koul to not be intimidated by the threats of these miscreant Muslims and display courage. If you are determined then peace will automatically return to Kashmir and if you start bowing before them then these people will ride on your head.

Ironically, on the one hand, the ‘Hindu Press’ was vociferously fighting for political rights of Indians under the British rule and, on the other, was against extension of minimum basic rights to the Muslims under a Hindu ruler. Their struggle for their rights was projected as communal agitation and an attempt to establish an ‘Islamic State’. Allama Muhammad Iqbal, an influential pro-Kashmir voice in British India, had to come out in the open and deny any communal angle to the Kashmir agitation. He blamed the ‘Hindu Press’ for making this propaganda.¹³ At a public meeting at Lahore on 14 August 1931, he clarified that Kashmiris were fighting for their rights and lifting of restrictions on their religious liberty. “They want religious freedom in the same measure as is available to Hindu subjects in Muslim princely states,”¹⁴ Iqbal explained, only to be accused of instigating an armed struggle against the Hindu ruler of Kashmir.

In its support for an autocrat, the ‘Hindu Press’ indulged in character assassination of Kashmiris and even advised the ruler on how to deal with them. The unarmed protesters fell in the scores to bullets, while the newspapers portrayed their peaceful resistance as ‘armed rebellion’. In a travesty of truth, the oppressed people were projected as oppressors. Some newspapers published cartoons that showed Kashmiri Muslims armed with spears setting buildings on fire, looting markets and snatching rifles from police and army. A cartoon even depicted a Kashmiri Muslim murdering a ‘Brahman girl’.¹⁵ The ‘Hindu Press’ made no bones about fighting a media war for the ruler of Kashmir. Every pro-Kashmir voice was literally pounced upon. Besides Allama Iqbal becoming a target of vicious

campaign, the *Statesman* and the *Civil and Military Gazette*, owned and edited by non-Muslims, faced the wrath of their own comrades in profession for trying to balance reporting on Kashmir. The two newspapers were lambasted by fellow journalists for ‘anti-Maharaja writings’.¹⁶ The Punjab Government was asked to take notice of their reporting, almost suggesting penal action against them. A demand was made to invoke the Princes Protection Act against those who spoke or wrote against the Maharaja of Kashmir.

The bias against Kashmiris flowed through every word brought out by these newspapers. They were threatened with serious consequences if they went against the ruler. Threats held out by a Kashmiri origin member of the Punjab Assembly, Raja Narinder Nath, and leaders of the right wing Hindu Mahasabha, B. S. Moonje and Vijaya Raghuacharya were prominently published. The trio warned of revenge actions against Muslim rulers of Bhopal and Hyderabad in case agitation in Kashmir was not stopped forthwith.¹⁷ The *Milap*, in a signed editorial, threatened boycott of Kashmiri goods and disallowing their sale in Indian cities to economically cripple the Valley. Non-participation in the agitation against the Hindu ruler was the only means of safety that they could ‘ignore at their own peril’, the newspaper warned.¹⁸

The ‘Hindu Press’ had, among its sources in the Valley, the pro-Maharaja Kashmiri Pandits and Punjabi Hindu traders settled in Kashmir by Dogra rulers. The former constituted the Dogra officialdom and the latter controlled business in Kashmir. Both had vested interest in the continuity and strength of the autocratic rule. They passed on to Lahore rumours and factually incorrect reports for publication. Among them was reporter Gwasha Lal Koul, allegedly on the payroll of the Kashmir Government, who filed twisted dispatches. He also wrote a defaming article about Iqbal in the *Tribune*.¹⁹ Jia Lal Kilam was another Pandit who wrote for these newspapers. News stories and write-ups based on dispatches and feedbacks of motivated reporters communalized a political agitation and made it look like a war between Hinduism and Islam. The right wing Hindu forces in India strengthened this perception. The fact of the matter was that there was an oppressor on the one side and an oppressed population on the other, and the two incidentally belonged to different faiths.

To counter the propaganda and present a ‘real picture of Kashmir’, some educated Muslim youth, including Mohammad Sayeed Masoodi, Ghulam Ahmad Ashai, Chowdhary Ghulam Abbas and Shoorish Kashmiri, using pseudonyms for fear of reprisal, wrote about the ground situation and secretly sent their reports to Lahore for publication. The *Inqilab* took the lead role in highlighting their dispatches. Its editor, Abdul Majid Saalik, made the contributors from Kashmir to “take an oath on the holy Qur'an that they would not mix an iota of falsehood in their reports.”²⁰ On his part, he promised them that under no circumstances he would disclose their identity. Once a magistrate visited his office and demanded the names of these contributors and original copies of their dispatches which Saalik refused. He argued that he was responsible for the contents of his newspaper and offered himself for arrest. When the magistrate left, he called for all dispatches from Kashmir and consigned them to fire.²¹ The Kashmir Government felt itchy by these reports.

In the meanwhile, two newspapers, namely the *Hamdard* and the *Martand*, were started in Srinagar in 1935. The former was jointly run by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and Prem Nath Bazaz “to lay the foundation of progressive nationalism in the State.”²² However, Abdullah and Bazaz soon fell apart and the newspaper was taken over by the latter. In 1946, when the Quit Kashmir Movement against the Dogra rule was launched by Abdullah, his National Conference alleged that at Prime Minister Ram Chandra Kak's behest the *Hamdard* was siding with the government.²³ The *Martand* represented the Kashmiri Pandits and identified itself with their politics. The community considered it as a ‘sacred duty’ to keep the newspaper running through monetary donations.²⁴ At one point in time, Gwasha Lal Koul was its editor. By 1947, over two dozen newspapers were published from Kashmir, but only few like the *Hamdard*, the *Roshni* and the *Khidmat* survived. However, the plight of Kashmiri Muslims continued to be reflected more by the Lahore’s ‘Muslim Press’ than the newspapers from Kashmir because there was strict censorship in Kashmir and periodicals were banned on trivial issues.

After the Partition, the vernacular press in Kashmir slowly progressed and Kashmir began to be reported upon in an objective manner internally. The emergence of the *Aftab* in 1958 and the *Srinagar Times*

in 1969 improved the media scenario, but the problem was that these newspapers were circulated within Kashmir only. The outside world still depended on the non-Kashmiri media for information about the Valley. So far as national, international and official media in Kashmir was concerned, Kashmiri Pandit community held monopoly on journalism. One would hardly find a Muslim reporter representing these sections of media. Mohammad Sayeed Malik, in late 1960s, was the first local Muslim correspondent to report for an Indian newspaper, the *Patriot*. Till 1983, he held this distinction when Yusuf Jameel joined the *Telegraph*, Calcutta. UNI and PTI, two Indian wire services, in Srinagar too were manned by members of the Pandit community.

The Indian Press in general inherited partiality in covering Kashmir from its Lahore predecessor. Reporting of major events like the movement launched by the Plebiscite Front (1955–75),²⁵ the Holy Relic Movement (1963–64),²⁶ the Pandit Agitation (1967), communal tension in Anantnag (1986), formation of the Muslim United Front (MUF) and Assembly Elections (1987) and the post-1989 developments, apart from routine events, was conspicuously partial and, in certain cases, provoked reaction outside Kashmir. It “chose to overlook the sentiment of people of the valley in whichever way it appeared, and selectively highlighted the developments that suited the official narrative.”²⁷ That, unfortunately, was true about all these past decades since 1947. Journalists who tried to objectively write about Kashmir were always in minority, and suffered criticism and allegations of going against the national interest.

The Srinagar-based reporters of the Indian news outlets had an identical angle of looking at and reporting developments. According to Mohammad Sayeed Malik, they “worked with the assumption of being the defenders of India’s national interest in Kashmir.”²⁸ This underlying assumption came through their reporting whenever issues and events of that kind came to be reported or commented upon. They toed the official line while reporting on events and developments. During the Holy Relic agitation and through the years of reporting on the Plebiscite Front, “almost the entire crowd toed the official line even while reporting detailed day-to-day facts about ground situation.”²⁹ On the whole, they treated the Plebiscite Front as a ‘hostile’ object for reporting. The angularity in day-to-day reporting on the Holy Relic

agitation originated from Srinagar-based Kashmiri reporters, all of whom happened to be Kashmiri Pandits. This, Malik holds, continued for long until “a few editors in New Delhi like S. Mulgaonkar of the *Hindustan Times*, Frank Moreas of the *Indian Express* and Nikhil Chakravarty of the influential left-leaning weekly, *Mainstream*, took a somewhat balanced position over the Plebiscite Front issue.”³⁰ Partial reporting about the Plebiscite Front had led Indian public to see ‘an evil’ in Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and when, in 1975, he was returned to power after disbanding the Plebiscite Front, they were taken by total surprise.

On Kashmir, there has always been difference between outlook and perspective of local and non-local journalists. This difference changed the context of reporting and comment accordingly. Mohammad Sayeed Malik, who has reported and written about Kashmir for over four decades, believes that the “non-Kashmiri journalists who work for establishments based in the Union capital and beyond come here with a mindset shaped by the Government of India’s official line of thinking on men and matters.”³¹ According to him, this ‘fundamental rider’ has to be kept in mind while assessing or comparing their reporting from Kashmir. “Psychologically most but certainly not all of them feel as being ‘guardians of India’s national interest’ in a troubled border state.”³² This mindset reflects on reporting from Kashmir. It had been like that and would be so in future too, Malik believes.

Throughout the period preceding 1990, local reporters of outside newspapers and news agencies remained friendly with the establishment. They hardly came into conflict with government over the issues of reporting, and sourced information mostly from official handouts and police and CID versions. The State Information Department and the Coffee House, where visitors drank more gossip than hot beverage, were their spots of information gathering and sharing. The negative fallout of friendly reporting by ground reporters in an “overzealous patriotic conduct,” according to Malik, was that the public opinion in India was taken in to believe that things were going smoothly in Kashmir. This mindset reflected on reporting especially about frequent clashes between government forces and Muslim protesters, whether demanding plebiscite or uninterrupted electric supply. Journalist Ghulam Nabi Khayal observes that whether during the Holy Relic

Movement or the Pandit Agitation, the reporters “never lagged behind in branding Kashmiri Muslims as anti-India and pro-Pakistan community.”³³ Kashmir was painted in dark colours whenever it hit the headlines politically, Khayal feels. Their stories “always smacked anti-Muslim bias in one way or another.”³⁴ Yusuf Jameel who shot to prominence through his reporting of Kashmir for the BBC in the early 1990s, too, talks about bias in reporting during the period prior to eruption of militancy. “Much before the outbreak of insurgency in 1989, some reporters would seek to attribute killing in police firing during street protests to cross-firing.”³⁵ On numerous occasions, incidents and events would be downplayed or overplayed depending on their nature. “Sometimes, an event or development worth reporting was just ignored for obvious reasons.” Barring a few exceptions, “their reporting style and actual reporting were totally disappointing.”³⁶

During this period, reporting in most part was ‘cyclostyle journalism’. A copy drafted by one journalist would land at multiple news desks in New Delhi with different by-lines. In those days, journalists would send their stories through the Telegraph Department and the concerned operator at the Central Telegraph Office in Srinagar would, as asked, transmit identical copy to different recipients with changed addresses. Some would make a couple of changes here and there, mainly in the intro. As for accountability, a stringer representing two widely regarded English newspapers, one each from North India and South India, got away with reporting, and the newspapers publishing in detail, two ‘major events’ that had never happened. One of these was an address to the troops by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi during her visit to Leh that she had cancelled because of inclement weather. The reporter was known to fiddle with figures and hard facts, what Yusuf Jameel says, “to increase his payment as per wordage prospects.”³⁷ In reporting accidents and natural calamities also, he would report casualty figures much higher than the actual toll to ensure that his copy was not substituted by that of a wire service.

The coverage of the Pandit Agitation in 1967, launched over a community girl marrying her Muslim colleague, exposed Indian mainstream newspapers’ bias. A personal matter between two consenting individuals, which was neither the first nor the last intercommunity marriage in Kashmir, was communalized by the Press. “Not

only the day-to-day event coverage of the agitation but even the facts of the case came to be distorted in newspaper reporting, mainly those filed for national newspapers and news agencies across India," recalls Mohammad Sayeed Malik.³⁸ The coverage, he says, betrayed manipulated uniformity to shape and direct its reaction. Only a few visiting journalists like Inder Malhotra, who represented the *Statesman*, "reported the 'other side' of the story."³⁹ The Srinagar-based correspondents filed elaborate and out of proportion reports, forcing a liberal Kashmiri Pandit leader like Prem Nath Bazaz to accuse them of "circulating exaggerated and untruthful items with anti-Muslim slant."⁴⁰ Reports filed by these journalists on day-to-day happenings used to be generally in line with India's 'national interest' and were one of the several main reasons why the newspaper reading public across India remained ignorant about ground realities in Kashmir. Chief Minister G. M. Sadiq, a diehard Indian and his successor Syed Mir Qasim (as we have already observed in Chapter 6) were aghast by these twisted reports.

Sadiq was not the only Chief Minister to have lamented partial reporting by the 'National Press'. Others too had serious complaints. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was often "misquoted and misrepresented" by Srinagar-based journalists whose bias against him sprang from the Land Reforms Act, which he enacted in the State to return land to tillers who in Kashmir happened to be Muslims.⁴¹ Ghulam Mohammad Shah had to swallow lot of bitter reporting by a 'motivated' press before his ouster by Rajiv Gandhi. Farooq Abdullah had the worst experience. During a media onslaught on him in 1987, burning of the State Congress Party office in Srinagar was editorially captioned by the *Hindustan Times* as "Srinagar on fire."⁴² A PTI report prominently carried by newspapers, accused Farooq of leading his supporters to the Congress office, insinuating that he was behind setting the building on fire. At the time of the incident, the Chief Minister was campaigning at Verinag, about 70 km from Srinagar. Sensationalizing the occurrence, the PTI report also claimed that the "fate of over 100 Congress (I) workers including the former Union Minister and party candidate from the Srinagar Lok Sabha constituency, Mohammed Shafi Qureshi, who were trapped inside the building was not immediately known."⁴³ "No one," wrote Arun Shourie

in his investigative story in the *India Today*, "was trapped inside the building at any stage."⁴⁴ With photographic evidence, he established that the fire in the building was an inside job. Farooq believed, and many in Srinagar concurred, that New Delhi newspapers furthered the agenda of Indian Establishment when it came to reporting on Kashmir. Slant in news stories or distortion of facts on the ground related to a particular event was not uncommon. "Sometimes even ethnic and religious bias would creep in,"⁴⁵ observes Yusuf Jameel.

Apart from targeting political leadership of Kashmir, the Indian mainstream media also ran a campaign against senior officers of the State belonging to the majority community. Such was the intensity of the campaign that Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, who had just returned to power after 22 years, lost trust in these officers. His then Principal Secretary, Ghulam Ahmad, later recalled the development thus:

At the outset, the Sheikh did not trust officers and looked upon them with suspicion, especially senior Muslim officers, because of an orchestrated campaign of vilification carried out by Delhi English press dominated in so far as press corps based in the state was concerned by members from one particular community. Series of articles appeared in the Delhi English press against these officers and the *piece de resistance* was a highly provocative article in the Calcutta magazine, SUNDAY, supposed to be well above the common run of magazines, which appeared on the death of Abdullah containing, *inter alia*, unmistakable insinuations and innuendoes direct[ed] against the senior Muslim officers.⁴⁶

Reporting on Kashmir during 1986–87 again brought to the fore partiality of the Indian mainstream press. In an atmosphere of communal tension following unlocking of the Babri Mosque and an issue arising out of allotting a small space for Muslim employees in the Civil Secretariat at Jammu for offering prayers, there were incidents of violence against some Kashmiri Muslims there in February 1986. News about these incidents, along with few injured passengers, reached Kashmir with rumours that some truck drivers from Anantnag were killed in Jammu. The rumours triggered a communal situation and

some attacks by miscreants on property and religious places of the minority community at a few places in Anantnag. Media blew these incidents out of proportion and presented the situation as highly explosive, where the Kashmiri Pandits were migrating from the Valley out of fear.

The migration stories were circulated irrespective of the fact that the Government of India had informed the Parliament that no individual or community migration had taken place. The *Hindustan Times* reported allotment of a storeroom for Muslim employees as “an old temple in the Jammu Secretariat which was in disuse had been converted into a mosque.”⁴⁷ It also reported that “an attempt was made to burn a family of a particular [Pandit] community at Nowgam bypass”⁴⁸ in Srinagar, without quoting any source or identifying the family. Makhan Lal Bhat, a local resident, categorically refutes any such incident having taken place in the area.⁴⁹ Abdul Majid, who resides at Nowgam Bypass since 1985, also rubbishes the allegation.⁵⁰ Alarmed by media reports, prominent social activist Baba Amte rushed to Kashmir and after visiting the ‘affected places’, found a vast gap between what was reported and what he found on the ground.⁵¹ State’s Director General of Police commended Muslims of Anantnag for protecting Kashmiri Pandits⁵² and the Hindu Prabhandak Committee denied that the Jamat-i-Islami, accused by a section of the media of being behind the communal violence, had any role in it.⁵³

In 1987, the media repeated the act. Some political parties, including the Jamat-i-Islami, the Itihadul Muslimeen and the Ummat-i-Islami, had joined hands to form an alliance called the MUF to fight assembly elections as a united opposition. The MUF was successful in attracting people in large numbers and hold impressive rallies. The development unnerved traditional political parties like the ruling the National Conference and the Indian National Congress which were in coalition. In the form of the MUF, here was a political alliance led by leaders like Syed Ali Shah Geelani, the present Chairman of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (G), coming forward to try electoral politics and the media, like the ruling coalition, not ready to give it any space. An impression was created that the MUF was anti-India and, once in majority in the State Assembly, would annul the accession of Kashmir to India. It was also criticized for asking Muslims to

“follow the tenets of Islam.”⁵⁴ On its part, the MUF did not dispel this impression, for it thought the accusation would enhance its electoral prospects. The media dubbed the alliance as a combination of ‘fanatical’ and ‘fundamentalist’ organizations and helped this impression go around.

The *Hindustan Times* in an editorial article “The Rise of Fundamentalism in Kashmir” described the MUF’s electoral battle as “more of a war between Islam and *Kufr* [infidelity].”⁵⁵ A picture of Kashmir overwhelmed by Islamic fundamentalism was sought to be circulated. Even pro-India National Conference leader Saifuddin Soz, demanding reservation for Kashmiris in professional colleges, was accused of having “echoed fundamentalists.”⁵⁶ In its tirade against the MUF, Indian media failed to take notice of the contradictions it was committing in reporting. Qazi Nisar’s Ummat-i-Islami, a constituent of the MUF was simultaneously “fanatical and fundamentalist” and “clear that the accession of the State [Jammu and Kashmir] to India was final.”⁵⁷

An atmosphere of suspicion and contempt was created about the MUF, only to be followed by large-scale rigging in elections in which its candidates were not only defeated by electoral fraud but also many along with their election agents, including the later day insurgent commanders like Syed Salahuddin and Mohammad Yasin Malik, were arrested and tortured in police stations. “The very fact that in the constituencies where MUF candidates had shot into initial leads on the first day of counting, counting was suspended and results declared after four or five days, which suggested that the ruling party had done ‘some mischief’.”⁵⁸ Many political analysts emphasize that this electoral deceit led to wide public disillusionment and outrage that, two years later, burst into militancy in Kashmir. However, to build a narrative that Kashmir was slipping into pro-Pakistan hands, reporters proved themselves to be far removed from history. In order to prove that Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah was on “tenterhooks” owing to pro-Pak elements, the instances quoted to substantiate the point were “emergence of the Al-Fateh and the People’s League.”⁵⁹ Al-Fateh had been neutralized half a decade before Farooq’s father Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah had returned to power in 1975, and the People’s League had been set up a year before that in 1974.

Partial reporting of developments by the ‘National Press’ during 1987 caused widespread anger among people in the Valley. The reporting saddened even the President of India who said, “[It] misrepresented situation and exaggerated the intensity of incidents.”⁶⁰ In one particular case, lawyers, writers and research scholars under the banner of the State Amity Council took exception to a news report with serious portents published in the *Statesman* on 22 August 1987. The Srinagar correspondent of the newspaper, notorious for misreporting, had reported that Muslim demonstrators in Srinagar “raided houses and shops belonging to the members of the minority community.” This happened at a time when reporting on Kashmir had raised tension outside the Valley and could have incited communal backlash. The State Amity Council felt “alarmed by the adverse effect the story could have in different parts of the country” and “noted with regret that the correspondent had several times in the past also tried to spark off communal feelings by ruthlessly assassinating facts and filing inflammatory stories.”⁶¹ Describing the news report as “highly preposterous and misleading,” the Council condemned journalists “who were consciously trying to disturb the age old and traditional communal harmony in Jammu & Kashmir” and demanded invocation of the Public Safety Act against them. In case of the reporter in question, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir was asked to “immediately withdraw all facilities extended to him by way of residential accommodation, etc.”⁶²

With the eruption of armed insurgency in 1989 and migration of the Kashmiri Pandits, Indian media, especially the electronic media, turned Kashmir into a highly emotive issue. A predominant section of the media, without a second look at facts, circulated stories and perceptions, creating an awful image of a Kashmiri Muslim. Statistics quoted by vested interests about the number of Kashmiri Pandit migrants and casualties suffered by them in the Valley were played over and over again to accord them legitimacy. For instance, media liberally disseminated false and misleading stories that Hindu temples in hundreds were razed in Kashmir, and that Kashmiri Muslims were actually hand in glove with militants in driving the Pandits away. No attention was paid to facts on ground or official reports and statistics.

By voluntarily depending on government sources and ignoring the ‘other side’, media in India has allowed public a controlled view

of the ground situation in Kashmir. It selectively highlights developments that suit the official narrative.⁶³ Strikes frequently observed by Kashmiris to express dissent or resentment against human rights violations are generally ignored or reported to give an entirely different perspective. Danish Nabi Gadda's "Partial Journalism—A Study of National Media of India and Kashmir Conflict" highlights the difference between Kashmiri sentiment and the media reality. He draws from Indian media coverage of Kashmir over a period of time to conclude that it "crushes professionalism and objectivity to serve what it usually describes as the country's 'national interest'."⁶⁴ Objective reporting done by few journalists like Harinder Baweja lies about destruction of temples in Kashmir or Pankaj Mishra on Chattisinghpura massacre was too little to change the trend; even journalist Parvez Bukhari believes that "nobody has reported these incidents as objectively, extensively and in proper perspective."⁶⁵

The lowest point in credibility touched on Kashmir was the Press Council of India sponsored B. G. Verghese's Report on Kunan Poshpura mass rape and the Indian media turning it into the strength of the state narrative. The microphone wielding journalists, in particular, have removed the difference between a civilian protesting against state terrorism and a gun-wielding militant fighting for freedom. Today, hardly anyone questions the 'nationalist' media's penchant for looking for a militant in every unarmed civilian killed by army or paramilitary forces in Kashmir. If there were some print journalists who tried to balance their reporting, things took a turn for the worse when the electronic media joined the bandwagon of misinformation. Ever since, the tirade against Kashmir, supported by reports far removed from reality, has seen no end.

At the peak of 2016 civilian protests following Burhan Wani's killing,⁶⁶ a Srinagar-based TV journalist working for a leading Indian Hindi news channel resigned, alleging that it was forcing him to do "false and fabricated" stories on Kashmir and "twisting, ignoring and even killing" those based on ground reality in the Valley.⁶⁷ He accused the channel of not using his stories on the killing of an ATM kiosk guard Riyaz Ahmad Shah and Assistant Professor Shabir Ahmad Mungoo by security forces and, on the other hand, "I was asked to do stories which would show the people of Kashmir particularly those out on the streets to protest in bad light."⁶⁸ He said that he was asked

to do a defamatory story on Burhan Wani and when he refused, the channel asked its Jammu reporter who did it from there.

It was only after 1990 when the English Press made its foray into Srinagar and later online editions of newspapers began to be published that a different version of news began to come out of Kashmir. The *Greater Kashmir* was the first to come up followed by others, such as the *Rising Kashmir*, the *Kashmir Monitor*, the *Kashmir Reader* and the *Kashmir Life*, to name a few, made a great impact. After the Pandit migration, the Kashmir beat of national and international media fell vacant. The void was filled by Muslim boys and girls, fresh out of Media Education Research Centre (MERC), University of Kashmir. They wrote about the other side of Kashmir that scarcely got reported earlier. According to Mohammad Sayeed Malik, realism was the most striking feature of this reportage, and these “young home-grown professionals were able to establish their skill and also make a mark.”⁶⁹ Majid Maqbool, one such promising scribe, feels that the young Kashmiri journalist have “realised [that] there is a lot to write about Kashmir, and there are many untold stories that need to be told and which will not be written about by others.”⁷⁰ Objective reporting from a conflict zone like Kashmir has its own challenges. Several journalists have paid for it, some with life. Yusuf Jameel escaped couple of bomb attacks, including one in which he was seriously injured and his colleague, Mushtaq Ali, was killed.

Another unique situation faced by local journalists working for various Indian media outlets is that in many cases, their editors do not trust their copies, howsoever factually correct, if it challenges the security narrative or the stated position of the establishment. In situations like mass protests and killings or periodic elections in Kashmir, when the ground situation and the state narrative are at variance, the newspapers and TV channels send journalists from New Delhi to do reporting, reducing their own Srinagar staff to a support system. During the devastating September 2014 floods, the electronic media’s reporting was pathetic, to say the least. Its whole emphasis was to project army as the saviour of ‘ungrateful Kashmiris’ and playing the footage of its rescue sorties which, the many eyewitnesses alleged, were concentrated on airlifting non-locals, mostly tourists. On such occasions, a local reporter might even be asked to take rest. During the Amarnath land

transfer row in 2008 and resultant large-scale deaths owing to police and paramilitary firing, Rashid Ahmad, then Srinagar correspondent of the *Hindustan Times*, was asked by his coordinating editor to take rest “after working so hard without a break.” Given the “dangerous proportions the situation was taking I continued reporting only to find my copies being ignored at the desk. The newspaper stopped mention of Kashmir situation after the call,” Ahmad recalls in one of his recent Facebook posts.⁷¹

Altaf Hussain, former correspondent of the *Times of India* recalls his copy being dropped in favour of PTI story in 1991, when at least 23 civilians were killed by CRPF at Chota Bazar in Srinagar. He reported the incident based on facts and eyewitness’ account that “the CRPF had resorted to unprovoked firing.” However, the newspaper carried the PTI story that reported the incident as ‘cross-fire’ and death toll as 32. In another incident, 18 persons, including 3 policemen, were killed in army firing in Kupwara district in 1994. The *Times of India* carried its correspondent’s copy, corroborated next day by the Divisional Commissioner and the Inspector General of Police. The army also announced probe into the incident. However, the *Indian Express*’ four-column front-page PTI-circulated story screamed, “Militants fire into market place killing 21.”⁷²

Sometimes, journalists reporting from Kashmir for international media also face issues for filing copies that the establishment back home is not comfortable with. Yusuf Jameel was asked by two Gulf newspapers to discontinue writing for them after succumbing to “pressure from Delhi.” “The then *Khaleej Times* editor, an Indian and my former colleague at Reuters, in writing asked me to stop filing stories from a particular date. I responded with a single line resignation letter,” Jameel recalls.⁷³ However, he had a different experience with the *Telegraph Calcutta*, where on two occasions, introduction of his copies and a quote of a politician were changed. He put his foot down and the editor, now himself a politician and a minister, agreed with Jameel and reprimanded the subeditor. Six years after Pankaj Mishra wrote in the *Guardian* that the Indian media reporting on civilian uprising in Kashmir during 2010 “was acting in concert with the government,”⁷⁴ the ‘concertinist’, fourth pillar of the state, had almost evolved into its fourth arm when Kashmir erupted again in 2016.

In tandem with a partial ‘nationalist’ media, trolling against Kashmiris on social media has alarmingly gone up. Hatemongers have launched an online war against them “with trolling and abusing becoming a common affair.”⁷⁵ Sadly, many of these trolls are Kashmiri Pandits living in different parts of India. Even tragedies like the devastating flood of 2014 and violent deaths and crippling injuries suffered by people in Kashmir in 2008, 2010 and 2016 serve for them as occasions of ‘celebration’. ‘Intellectuals’ with large following on social media also happily jump on the bandwagon.⁷⁶ During the July–August 2016 civilian protests and prolonged lockdown, following the killing of Burhan Wani, hatemongering against Kashmiri Muslims touched new heights. Many Facebook and Twitter users were observed taking potshots on people in distress and, in some cases, rejoicing casualties. Anyone “expressing sympathy or empathy with the Muslims is seen as a betrayer of the [Kashmiri Pandit] community.”⁷⁷

Rumours with potential of serious backlash like attack on Amarnath pilgrims and minority Kashmiri Pandit families by Muslim protesters were circulated and widely shared on social media. The senior BJP leader and Deputy Chief Minister of the State, Nirmal Singh, denying occurrence of any such incident⁷⁸ proved of little consequence. Kashmiri Pandit employees recruited in the Valley under a Government of India relief package attempted to exploit the situation for their own benefit. They returned to Jammu where media reported them alleging that their transit camps in Kashmir were pelted with stones, demanding their transfer along with posts out of the Valley. Police vehemently denied any incident of stone pelting on any Pandit transit camp in the Valley. A senior police officer said that the Pandit employees “are lying.”⁷⁹ In another case of mischief, a Kashmiri Pandit Facebook user uploaded a doctored video on his Timeline, showing the Martand Temple at Mattan in South Kashmir being attacked by stone pelting youth.⁸⁰ A section of media, without verification, published the news of the alleged attack. When some Facebook users, including few Kashmiri Pandits, called his bluff, he removed the video but not before it was shared by hundreds of people and had evoked thousands of anti-Kashmiri Muslims comments.⁸¹ The head priest of the temple, Ashok Sodhi, vehemently denied any attack on the shrine and told the Current News Service (CNS):

It is a doctored video. I must tell you Muslims in the area themselves protect this temple. Without verifying the authenticity of the video, some Hindi newspapers from outside published this ‘fake’ news while some Pandits who claim to be the messiah of the community misinformed the country through social media.⁸²

Commenting on the trolling by Kashmiri Pandits, Nitasha Koul observes that they “have been radicalised by Hindutva forces over the last two decades since they were forced to flee Kashmir in fear.”⁸³ Majid Maqbool finds it painful:

At least, when you see so many kids savagely blinded by government forces, you can keep quiet and not feel the pain, which is still understandable, but when they go on and say ‘you deserved it’, ‘why are kids on streets?’ etc., it reflects about a dehumanized people.⁸⁴

Online hatemongering and vilification of a community has caused disbelief and anguish in Kashmir, but it has failed to damage its cultural fabric. The Valley continues to produce shining examples of cordiality and communal harmony. Such instances were aplenty during the post-Burhan Wani civil upsurge. Under strict curfew across Kashmir, Muslim neighbours of a Hindu family in downtown Maharajgunj came out to perform last rites of an aged lady.⁸⁵ In another incident, Muslim villagers, again defying curfew, rescued and tended to Amarnath pilgrims injured in a road accident.⁸⁶ Zubeda Begum and her husband walked several miles in the curfew-imposed streets of Srinagar to deliver a bagful of food items at the Jawaharnagar residence of Diwanchand Pandit who had run out of stock in view of several days of continuous curfew.⁸⁷

Notes and References

1. Fauq was an author, historian, journalist and poet of Kashmiri origin whose ancestors had migrated to Punjab. He was close to Allama Iqbal and, over a period of time, published and edited many newspapers from Lahore, the first in 1901. Through these newspapers, he championed the cause of Kashmiris. Some quote 1905 as the year when he made application for starting a newspaper from Kashmir.
2. Sofi, *Jammu Wa Kashmir Mai Urdu Sahafat*, 55.

3. Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, 140.
4. Sofi, *Jammu Wa Kashmir Mai Urdu Sahafat*, 55.
5. Ibid., 60.
6. Abdullah, *Aatash-e-Chinar*, 39.
7. Bacha Saqa, whose real name was Habibullah Kalakani, was a highway robber who became the king of Afghanistan in January 1929 after deposing Amanullah Khan. He was overthrown in October 1929 by Mohammad Nadir Khan. Being son of a water-carrier, he was known as *bacha saga* (son of a water-carrier). . . .
8. The Government records claim that Abdullah was appointed on a salary of ₹60 per month. (File No. C.S./P. B.151/S, Year 1931, State Archives Repository, Jammu.)
9. *Daily Milap*, Lahore, 25 August 1931; *Daily Pratap*, Lahore, 26 August 1931.
10. *Daily Milap*, Lahore, 26 August 1931.
11. *Inqilab*, Lahore, 12 August 1931.
12. Ibid.
13. *Daily Siasat*, Lahore, 16 August 1931.
14. Ibid.
15. *Weekly Guru Ghantaal*, 30 August 1931.
16. *Weekly Amar*, Lahore, 31 August 1931.
17. *Inqilab*, Lahore, 15 August 1931.
18. *Milap*, 26 August 1931.
19. Ghulam Nabi Khayal in an e-mail on 11 August 2016.
20. Saalik, Abdul Majid, *Sarguzasht* (autobiography), 237.
21. Khurshid Alam Khan, "Kashmir Mai Urdu Sahafat Ke Sang-i-Meel," *Aftab Aur Srinagar Times*, 28–29.
22. Bazaz, *The History of Struggle for Freedom in Kashmir*, 141.
23. Sofi, *Jammu Wa Kashmir Mai Urdu Sahafat*, 135.
24. Ibid., 137.
25. Two years after Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was dethroned as the Prime Minister of Jammu and Kashmir on 9 August 1953, his supporters floated a political organization called the Plebiscite Front. The Front headed by Abdullah's lieutenant, Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg, spearheaded a peaceful mass movement for holding plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir as promised under the United Nations Resolutions to decide the future of the State. The Front was wound up after 20 years when Abdullah returned to power in 1975 under an agreement with the Government of India.
26. During the intervening night of 26–27 December 1963, the holy relic housed at the revered Muslim shrine of Hazratbal in Srinagar mysteriously disappeared, plunging Kashmir into unprecedented turmoil. A massive agitation was launched by people for its restoration which ended only with its equally mysterious recovery by the government about a month later. For a long time, the Kashmiris demanded identification and bringing to the fore the real culprit of the theft, but the government did not lift the veil of secrecy from the incident.

27. Gadda, Danish Nabi, “Partial Journalism”—A study of national media of India and Kashmir Conflict,” 13–23.
28. Mohammad Sayeed Malik in an interview with author on 11 August 2016.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. In an e-mail on 11 August 2016.
34. Ibid.
35. In an interview with the author on 4 August 2016.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Mohammad Sayeed Malik in an interview with author on 11 August 2016.
39. Ibid.
40. Bazaz, *Kashmiri Pandit Agitation and Its Aftermath*, 20.
41. Abdullah told this in an interview with Yusuf Jameel months before his death on 8 September 1982. (As told by Jameel to the author on 4 August 2016.)
42. Arun Shourie, “The Srinagar fire: Whodunit?” *India Today*. www.indiatoday.intoday.in/story/investigation-turns-up-startling-evidence-in-congressi-head-quarters-fire-in-srinagar/1/371968.html
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. In an interview with the author on 4 August 2016.
46. Ahmad, *My Years with Sheikh Abdullah: Kashmir 1971–1987*, 46.
47. *Hindustan Times*, 4 February 1986.
48. Ibid., 27 February 1987.
49. In an interview with the author on 29 August 2016.
50. In an interview with the author on 24 August 2016.
51. *Weekly Ishaet*, 18–24 April 1986.
52. Ibid., 28 February 1986.
53. Jawad Hussain Reshi, “Jammu wa Kashmir Kay Mojoodah Haalaat,” *Srinagar Times*, 30 April 1986.
54. *Hindustan Times*, 11 May 1987, 26 May 1987.
55. Arun Joshi, “Rise of Fundamentalism in Kashmir,” *Hindustan Times*, 7 July 1987.
56. Ibid.
57. *Hindustan Times*, 7 July 1987, 20 July 1987.
58. Joshi, “Rise of Fundamentalism in Kashmir,” 7 July 1987.
59. Ibid.
60. *Weekly Ishaet*, 17–22 July 1986.
61. Press Release issued in Srinagar by the State Amity Council on Thursday, 27 August 1987.
62. Ibid.

63. Gadda, “‘Partial Journalism’—A study of national media of India and Kashmir Conflict,” 13–23.
64. Ibid.
65. In a telephonic interview with the author on 15 August 2016.
66. Burhan was a 22-year old commander of the Hizbul Mujahideen militant group whose killing on 8 July 2016 resulted in unprecedented civilian protests across Kashmir. The police and paramilitary forces used disproportionate force to quell stone-pelting protesters causing large scale casualties. By August 2016, 83 people, mostly youth, were killed and over 11,000 were injured. About 600 suffered pellet injuries in vital parts of the body and many were rendered blind.
67. *The Asian Age*, 1 September 2016.
68. Ibid.
69. In an interview with the author on 11 August 2016.
70. In an interview with the author on 27 July 2016.
71. Rashid Ahmad’s post on his Facebook timeline on 1 August 2016.
72. Altaf Hussain in a telephonic interview on 23 August 2016.
73. In an interview with the author on 4 August 2016.
74. *The Guardian*. www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2010/aug/14/silence-over-kashmir-conflict
75. *Greater Kashmir*, 26 August 2016.
76. Ibid.
77. Pradeep Magazine, *Hindustan Times*, 15 July 2016.
78. *Daily Excelsior*, Jammu, 17 July 2016.
79. *Kashmir Reader*, 29 July 2016.
80. *Greater Kashmir*, 26 August 2016.
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid., 25 August 2016.
83. Koul, “Kashmiri Pandits Are a Pawn in the Games of Hindutva Forces,” *The Wire*, 7 January 2016.
84. In an email to the author on 25 August 2016.
85. *Greater Kashmir*, online edition, 17 July 2016. (The Jammu and Kashmir Government banned mobile telephone and internet services and temporarily blocked cable TV, besides stopping newspapers from publishing for several days after protests spiralled across Kashmir, following the killing of Burhan Wani. As a result, no newspaper was published in Srinagar for few days.)
86. *Hindustan Times*, 13 July 2016.
87. *Mail Online India*, 11 July 2016. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-3685265/This-humanity-lies-Muslim-couple-defy-Srinagar-s-curfew-walk-miles-violent-streets-bring-food-starving-Pandit-friends.html>

Epilogue

A Kashmiri Pandit's story of Kashmir is unfinished without an emphatic reference to himself as an aborigine of the Valley. The term finds returning mention in the community's narrative on 'persecution and exodus'. It is invoked to bring home the point that the Pandits, 'the only original inhabitants of Kashmir', were subjected to forced conversion and driven out of their homeland by Muslims—by implication the outsiders—who usurped their properties. If one goes by the storyline, the aboriginal status of a Kashmiri Pandit "can be traced through the annals of history in the Valley."¹ The community's claim of being aborigines is rooted in the mythological account of Kashmir forwarded by the *Nilamata Purana*. Kashmiri Pandits assert that they are the descendants of Kashyapa who had the lake Satisar drained and caused human settlements on the thus emerged land. Being the progeny of Kashyapa, they argue, means being "the original residents of Kashyapmar, the modern Kashmir."² According to the *Nilamata Purana* the *Nagas* were the children of Kashyapa. Kashmiri Pandits emphasize that they are the descendants of Kashyapa or, in other words, of the *Nagas*.

The claimants of the only aborigine status in Kashmir practise Shaivism which, in its earliest form, is a post mid-9th century AD development. It took some more time to actually turn into a practicing religion. Its first theologian, Somananda was born in 875 AD and died in 925 AD. While it is difficult, not impossible, to conclusively identify the religion of the earliest man in Kashmir, there is no confusion about the fact that Shaivism in Kashmir is a later day introduction, preceded, as it was, by Buddhism and Islam. As is corroborated by history, Buddhism was introduced in Kashmir as early as the 3rd century BC and, from Kalhana's account, we observe prominent Muslim

footprints in Kashmir from the 8th century AD. It is interesting to note that in the oldest extant narrative of Kashmir, the *Rajatarangini*, we do not come across words like Pandits and Brahmans. Abraham Eraly elaborates this premise further when he observes that “Brahmin as a varna hardly had any presence in historical records before the Gupta Empire era [3rd century to 6th century CE],” and “no Brahmin, no sacrifice, no ritualistic act of any kind ever, even once, is referred to in any Indian text” dated to be from the first century CE or before.³ Their role as priests and repository of sacred knowledge, as well as their importance in the practice of Vedic Shrauta rituals, grew during the Gupta Empire era and thereafter.⁴

Leaving aside, for a moment, what the annals of history have to offer on the subject, the aboriginal theorists, on the one hand, claim that mass conversion of Hindus of Kashmir was brought about by force and, on the other, describe the minority Hindus, who did not convert, as the ‘only natives of Kashmir’. By this logic, the Muslim kings—the so-called villains in the story—have actually converted (the non-existent) non-Kashmiri Hindus to Islam. The other scenario is that the converted masses automatically lost the aboriginal status for deserting their faith! The neo-converts and their generations after assuming Muslim names retained their surnames which they continue to share with their ex-coreligionists and compatriots. That raises an important question: Is a Kashmiri Wanchoo or a Bazaz or a Raina an aborigine if he is a Hindu and not if a Muslim? One would come across among Muslims of Kashmir any number of surnames that are equally common among the Pandits. Among these are Bhat, Raina, Nath, Langoo, Malla, Bazaz, Saraf, Munshi, Watal, Wali, Khar, Shangloo, Nehru, Gagar, Kharoo, Aga, Jalali, Peer, Pandit, Parimoo and Mattoo.⁵ The ‘only original inhabitants’ premise seeks to dislodge from the aborigine status the millions of Kashmiri Muslims sharing these and many more surnames with the Pandits. The Kashmiri race, it may be pointed out, “comes from one stock, inherit one culture and speak one common language.”⁶

For going through the annals of history to find out if Kashmiri Pandits are the only original inhabitants of Kashmir, one would naturally refer to the *Rajatarangini*, ‘the oldest recorded account’ of the land and its people and the one that a Kashmiri Pandit would,

in reverence, hold as the Bible on Kashmir's ancient history. There, however, is one problem. The tome was composed in the 12th century, when neither mass conversion of Hindus had taken place nor were there Muslim kings with naked swords running after their Hindu subjects. Much as Kalhana through his 'mind's eye and divine intuition'⁷ could see the events preceding him by 3,000 years, he did not utilize these faculties to foresee developments taking place two centuries after him. So, he is not in a position to enlighten us on whether Kashmiri Pandits, who stuck to their faith in the face of mass conversion, were the only original inhabitants of Kashmir or their converted blood too had a claim over this honour. What, however, the record keeper of the 'Hindu Kashmir' shares with us is a significant development taking place in Kashmir during the 6th century AD that the 'original inhabitants' would, most likely, want to be kept under the wraps.

Before coming to that development, it would be interesting to recall that the land of Kashmir itself does not produce any material evidence in support of the aborigine theory. The Hindu religious literature, such as *Nilamata Purana* and the *mahatmyas*, written after the 5th century AD and the archaeological evidence unearthed do not match in so far as the presence of the *Nagas*, the claimed ancestors of Kashmiri Pandits is concerned. As we have already observed (in Chapter 1), while archaeological evidence has testified to human presence in Kashmir as early as 780,000 years, no such confirmation is forthcoming with respect to the presence of the *Nagas*. The Burzahom, Gufkral and Simthan, the first revealed human settlements in Kashmir, do not go with the *Nagas* theory and, naturally, any premise built over it. The terracotta figurine, the Harwan tiles or the numismatics finds, none subscribes to the *Nagas* hypothesis. The earliest religious images discovered so far relate either to Buddhism (2nd–3rd centuries AD) or post-5th century Hinduism. While the Burzahom Neolithic settlement does not give any clue about the faith of its people, it clearly shows that they buried their dead, which is not in line with the Vedic instructions that Kashmiri Pandits subscribe to. That leaves the *Nilamata Purana* as the only 'evidence' to claim the existence of the *Nagas* in Kashmir. Unfortunately, however, it is undecided about their form. In the absence of any corroborative evidence coming from the literature anterior to the *Nilamata* or any historian of the past seconding

this possibility, the *Nagas* in Kashmir are mythological rather than historical characters. Any claim to be their progeny is only theoretical.

Coming back to the development during the 6th century AD, the momentous occurrence changed the religious landscape of Kashmir. As we already know, in 530 AD, a monster of a man in the person of Mihirakula, thrown out of North India for his vicious conduct, entered Kashmir and occupied its throne after killing the king who had extended hospitality to him and given him refuge. Mihirakula, a White Hun, had arrived with his horde whose religious practices were different from that of the local people. Buddhism was then deep rooted in Kashmir. The popularity of the religion is borne out by the fact that Kushan ruler, Kanishka, held the 4th World Buddhist Conference here, marking the birth of a new and progressive Buddhism known as the Mahayana.

Arrival of Buddhist scholars like Hieun Tsiang in Kashmir too points to this fact. Kashmiri Buddhist scholars and monks spread the message of the Buddha to Central Asia, China and Korea on the one side and, on the other, to Sri Lanka, Java and Sumatra.⁸

The religion travelled to Ladakh, a Buddhist populated area even today.

What we learn from the *Rajatarangini*, and Aurel Stein's notes is that Mihirakula's religious propensity was markedly leaned towards Shaivism.⁹ Recalling at the risk of repetition, his preference for Shaivism was evidenced "by his coins which, in the emblems of bull and trident and in the legends *jayatu trsa*, *jayatu vrsadhvaja*, display a distinct fancy towards *S'auivism*".¹⁰ He founded at S'rínagri (Srinagar) Mihiresvara, the shrine of Shiva, and in Holada (Vular Pargana) the large town called Mihirapura.¹¹ He oppressed the Buddhist population and demolished their religious places and symbols. In Hiuen Tsiang's account, he is a persecutor of Buddhist institutions.¹² On the other hand, he emerges as a liberal patron of Shaivism who extended courtesies to and distributed *agraharas* among the Brahmans. In a significant development of far-reaching consequences, he brought Brahmins from Gandhara and settled them in Kashmir, chiefly at Vijeshwara (Bijbehara) and bestowed on them a thousand *agraharas*. Kalhana describes these Brahmins "as resembling himself [Mihirakula] in their habits and verily themselves the lowest of the twice-born."¹³ An *agrahara* to each Brahman would

mean that at least 1,000 of them were settled in Bijbehara alone. If more than one Brahman were accommodated in one *agrahara* then their number would be as large. Mihirakula's generous patronage gave these Brahmins immense influence and a conducive atmosphere to flourish in. The open war that the ruler waged against Buddhism further increased their clout and within a short period they started wielding power over the lives of the people.

Mihirakula's munificence proved conducive for the propagation of Shaivism in Kashmir and, not long after he was gone, it had gained foothold in the land, so much so that religious texts like the *Nilamata Purana* (6th–8th century AD) and the *mahatmyas* were written after literally wiping out Buddhism from Kashmir. The literature was aimed at sanctifying religious places, majority of which were built on the Buddhist sites, and rituals and ceremonials of Shaivism. It gave birth to a new narrative on Kashmir's physical and cultural history that is now fervently guarded by the followers of Shaivism in Kashmir. However, it was only during the 8th or the beginning of the 9th century AD that Shaivism had its profound appearance in Kashmir¹⁴ and became "the dominant cult of Kashmir from the tenth century."¹⁵ The first teacher of Shaivism, Tryambakaditya, settled in Kashmir Valley around 800 AD.¹⁶ Through Kalhana's and Khemendra's account and other sources (in Chapter 4), we get a broad view of how cleverly and craftily the *Shaivite* Brahmins exploited the common people and manoeuvred their intrusion in the corridors of power and stayed there irrespective of change in political dispensations.

Mihirakula was not the only ruler who brought to Kashmir the Brahmins from outside. There were others also who did the same. Prior to him, Jaluka brought and "settled from that region [Aryavarta] people of all four castes in his own land and particularly righteous men acquainted with legal procedure."¹⁷ Gopaditya, sixth in line after Mihirakula, expelled from the country those Brahmins who had taken to irreligious and immoral practices and in their stead brought and settled other Brahmins from "pure countries."¹⁸ Besides, Didda, the 10th century AD ruler, and Jayasimha (1128–49 AD) also "encouraged lots of Brahmins from outside to settle in Kashmir."¹⁹ It calls for a serious study to find out who were the descendants of these Brahmins and *Shaivite* teachers who were brought from Gandhara by Mihirakula

or settled by Gopaditya, Didda and Jayasimha in Kashmir or who, like Tryambakaditya, came as late as up to the 8th century to take permanent residence in Kashmir. This might as well help approach the ‘original inhabitants’ issue in an academic way.

The claim of being the only aborigine community is as imperfect as the other one about the Pandits being the sole inheritors of a 5,000-year old history of Kashmir. Like in the case of the former, its claimants ignore the fact that inheritance to this unique treasure would flow to both the communities through a common fountain—the land that they had been living in together from times immemorial, irrespective of their present faith. However, the majority community is all but overzealous to invoke the 5,000-year old history, the first 3,000 years of which are the work of a versifier’s ‘mind’s eye’ and ‘divine intuition.’ Historians and scholars are unanimous that the ‘recorded history’ of Kashmir touches the realm of authenticity only post-7th–8th century AD. Before that, it is only a make-believe account of the supposed rulers and events associated with them.

Like the terms holocaust, genocide and mass rape, the aborigine angle given to the sad story of migration of Kashmiri Pandits in 1990 is a political spin. It has an emotional appeal among the Hindu majority of India, especially its fast-expanding extreme right wing, which the community leadership looks towards for support. The claim provides a foundation to the victimhood narrative while simultaneously demonizing and, theoretically at least, dislodging the ‘usurper’ community from its rightful ownership of the land. The whole premise is based on ‘We’ and ‘They’—‘We’, the Kashmiri Pandits, who as the erstwhile majority were persecuted and converted into a minority, and ‘They’, the Kashmiri Muslims, who converted a Hindu land into an Islamic territory, which is of utmost importance for the Hindus to reclaim.

For a very long time now—in fact, several centuries—Kashmiri Muslims have been weighed down by the blame of forcibly converting their Hindu brethren, a sin which they never committed. Logically, if over 90 per cent people in a country decide to convert to another religion, the remainder members of the community, who did not go with them, cannot accuse the converts of reducing them to a minority. Historically, it is proven that long before the establishment of the Muslim rule, Muslim footprints were already visible on Kashmir’s soil.

The voluntary mass conversion came about later through preaching by spiritual guides over three centuries. Had the sword of a king converted people, at least some of the converts, if not all, would have returned to their original faith soon after the threat was gone. But no such thing happened even after the much maligned Sikandar died and his 'benevolent' successor and son reportedly issued a decree "allowing all those who had embraced Islam under pressure to return to their faith if they so wished."²⁰ Ever since that mass conversion, Kashmir did not see any case of, what the Hindutva groups now call, *ghar waapsi*. Had any such development taken place, the Brahman chroniclers would have pointed out that to buttress their claim of forced conversions earlier. The long oppression suffered by the Muslims of Kashmir under the Sikh and the Hindu rule was enough for these forced converts or their children to revert to the religion of their ancestors and save themselves from state persecution. If conversion came about by the state force, who converted at sword point the ruler of the time, Rinchana, or his prime minister and other nobles? Did they also convert under duress? For the sake of argument, if the forced conversion of Kashmiri Hindus is a fact of history, the victims were the converts who were 'forced' to change faith, not the Pandits who retained theirs. The Muslim converts had to undergo a double persecution. First, as Hindus at the hands of the 'bigoted Muslim rulers' and, second, as Muslims at the hands of equally 'bigoted Hindu rulers'.

Balraj Madhok came up with a fantastic story, according to which the Muslims of Kashmir made a collective approach to the 19th century Hindu ruler, Maharaja Ranbir Singh, for being taken back into the Hindu fold, pleading with him that "they had been forcibly converted to Islam against their will and were longing to re-embrace their ancestral faith."²¹ Madhok, the right wing Hindu politician, expressed the regret of his life that the 'short-sighted Kashmiri Pandits' sabotaged a major event "which could have changed the whole course of history of Kashmir."²² He writes:

Ranbir Singh sought the guidance of Swamy Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of Arya Samaj, in the matter. Swami Dayand advised him that he could take them back in Hinduism after performing certain rites. The proposed return of Kashmiri Muslims to their original faith was not to the liking of short sighted Kashmiri

Pundits who were having hey day since the return of Dogra Hindu rule. They tried to dissuade the Maharaja. When they found him adamant they took to a subterfuge. They filled some boats with stones and brought them midstream before Maharaja's palace on the Jhelum. They threatened him that they would commit suicide by drowning along with the sinking boats as a protest against his decision to take back Muslims into Hindu fold and that he would be then guilty of "*Brahm Hatya*" i.e. murder of Brahmins. Ranbir Singh was a brave soldier. But he could not muster courage to face the crafty Brahmins, who were out to misinterpret the Vedic "dharma" for their selfish ends. The plan of return of Kashmiri Muslims to Hinduism thus fell through.²³

As in case of the larger narrative on Kashmir, which abounds in make-believe account, the story weaved by Madhok is only a flight of his imagination. Ranbir Singh ruled Kashmir from 1857 AD to 1885 AD, which in terms of history would mean 'yesterday' only. This is the time when any such incident would have attracted wide attention and transferred it into the pages of history. Around this time, Kashmir was frequented by European travellers and writers who extensively wrote about it and its people. None of them has mentioned the Muslims of Kashmir individually or collectively approaching their Hindu ruler for their readmission to Hinduism. Significantly, men like Walter Lawrence and M. A. Stein, who have voluminous works on Kashmir to their credit, were in the Valley around this time. We find no mention of this 'incident' in their writings either. Again, why would Muslims of Kashmir need a go-ahead from their Hindu ruler if they were so desperate to 'return to Hinduism'? They could simply renounce Islam and declare their homecoming. What is actually known to have happened is that Ranbir Singh toyed with the idea of 'reconverting' Muslims to reclaim Kashmir as a Hindu majority land, but Kashmiri Pandits, feeling the prospect of losing their privileges, "outright rejected the suggestion of Maharaja Ranbir Singh."²⁴

The allegation of forced mass conversion is fragile also because of those who make it fail to conclusively identify the so-called culprit. Sometimes it is the Muslim kings, especially Sikandar and his neo-convert Prime Minister Suhabhatta, who took the Muslim name of

Saif-ud-Din after conversion, who are blamed for turning a Hindu Kashmir into a ‘Muslim State’ and, at other times, Muslims as a community are blamed for the sin. If, for the sake of argument, the blood-thirsty Muslim kings, one after the other, killed and persecuted Hindus to forcibly convert them to Islam, how did a handful of them escape this all out slaughter and cruelty? Did they resist the forced conversion and succeed? Unfortunately, the pages of history do not reflect any resistance unless invented by some zealot Brahman writer in the 19th century. Again, if the ‘forced conversion’ resorted to by Muslim kings is a fact of history, why should converted masses or their progeny shoulder the blame? None of these kings, as we have observed earlier (in the Prologue), were of Kashmiri origin. They all came from outside the Kashmir mainland and occupied its throne. Significantly, for administering the affairs of the state, they depended on Pandits rather than Muslims. The Pandit Narrative presents the converts as persecuted and the persecutor in the same breath. On the one hand, it holds Muslim kings responsible for persecuting and forcing the Kashmiri Hindus to convert to Islam and, on the other, accuses the thus converted people of hunting for their erstwhile brethren.

The alleged persecution of Hindu subjects by Muslim rulers and the animosity of the Muslim majority towards the Hindu minority in Kashmir reside more in writings of some Brahman scribes than in history. These ‘non-historians’ engaged themselves in building a community narrative rather than narrating the past. Being the only literate community in Kashmir at a time when the Muslim majority was piecing their lives together under a malevolent dispensation, these writers painted the Muslim rule, as well as the majority community, in black. The literature produced and influenced by these worthies is a story of their victimhood. “The past recalled by the Pandits thus differed substantially from the past which had actually occurred.”²⁵ A look at the ‘community sources’ unveils, what Henny Sender observes, “the same bees in their bonnets as one finds in the bonnet of Anand Koul and listens to the same buzzing as one listens to from [Koul’s] *The Kashmiri Pandit*.” This history remembered and recorded by Kashmiri Brahmans is a “mirage of reality, distorted by the defence of private interests and influenced by changed cultural values.”²⁶ It exists because it serves the narrative. Sender observes:

Instances of royal persecution and Brahmanical flight during the pre-Sultanate period have not imposed themselves on the collective memory of the Kashmiri Pandit community. The pre-Muslim period of Kashmir's history is remembered, instead as a golden age, contrasting sharply with the subsequent centuries of Muslim rule.²⁷

Sender goes further to describe the community history built by the Pandit writers as a mirage of reality and not a tale of relentless oppression. She writes:

The actual history of the Pandit community of Kashmir is neither a tale of paradise lost, nor of relentless oppression. Its beginnings are shrouded more in legendary claims than of reality. The early history of the Kashmiri Brahmins as they themselves have remembered and recorded it illustrates Jan Vasina's description of testimony as a mirage of reality, distorted by the defence of private interests and influenced by changing cultural values.²⁸

Following the Pandit migration in 1990, the persecution narrative was reinvented and circulated through quicker and more potent medium than was available to the previous narrators. The reworking of history to claim victimhood and assert a separate and distinctive identity was used as a crucial tool. To establish that attacks on temples were a continuous process since the establishment of the Muslim sultanate, the gap between the termination of the Hindu Dogra rule and the onset of militancy is plugged by the discovery that "[the] encroachment of temple land by majority community with active help of fundamentalist elements started after 1947 when Maharaja Hari Singh abdicated his throne."²⁹ Amazingly, the idiom used by the previous narrator has travelled unchanged to the present. Hence, if Sikandar was breaking temples "day and night"³⁰ during the 14th century, "more than 200 temples in the Kashmir Valley were damaged after the eruption of armed insurgency."³¹ On the other hand, after persecution, only 'eleven Brahman [Kashmiri Pandit] families'³² survived in medieval Kashmir, in the post-1989 situation "*Panditun ke senkdun, hazarun gharun aur mandirun ko jaladiya geya ya zameen mai dha diya geya.... Pandit[un] ke pooray pooray gaon ko saaf kiya geya*" [Hundreds and

thousands of houses and temples of the Pandits were torched or razed to the ground.... Entire Pandit villages were cleared [of their population].³³ In 1931, "the trouble is led by such people who want to see the establishment of an Islamic State in north India"³⁴ and post-1990, when Kashmir was either directly ruled by India or its handpicked men, the Pandits would not return to the "servitude of a Muslim State."³⁵ Sikandar, we were told, offered the Brahmins the choices of "death, conversion or exile"³⁶ and the Pandits in 1990 were asked to "*reliq tcheliv ya geliv* [convert, run away or die]."³⁷

A dominant section of the Indian media is playing the main role in disseminating these stories and perceptions. A seven-minute duration film with a Kashmiri Pandit actor as protagonist screened by an English language TV channel as its prime time presentation on 19 January 2016 is the latest piece with the least regard for facts and potential to promote communal hatred. Historically, an influential section of the media, known as the Hindu Press before 1947 or the Indian Mainstream Press of today, has exhibited prejudice against the majority community of Kashmir. The questionable role of the media in the wake of the 13 July 1931 developments, the Pandit agitation of 1967 and the communal situation in 1986 aptly demonstrate the unfair role of the fourth pillar of democracy (in Chapters 5 and 6). Saner elements within the communities have often questioned reporting and commentaries on Kashmir by this section of the media, arguing that it promotes communal tension. With readily available forums of mass media, some self-appointed leaders of the Pandit community, almost on daily basis, give vent to their bitterness against Kashmiri Muslims.

The unpleasantness in relations existing between the two communities has its origin in the socio-economic and educational development of Muslims, especially after 1947, that unseated the Pandits from overlordship of the masses literally subservient to them for centuries. The opposition to Muslims getting even meagre share in government jobs could be seen in this background. Since logic and facts were not with the supposed victim community to counter this, a bogey of persecution and discrimination was raised, as repetitively observed in 1931, 1967 and 1986. On each of these occasions, the allegations of religious persecution were made only to camouflage the claim to more employment opportunities and the perceived threat to the Pandit monopoly

on government services. Each time, the much hue and cry raised over ‘discrimination and religious persecution’ manifested itself ultimately in the demand for more employment avenues. Notwithstanding this, the community is observed enjoying the spoils of power throughout history, whether under Muslim or non-Muslim rule.

In any discourse on the current relationship between Kashmir’s two main communities, the advocates of the Muslim–Pandit amity often invoke, what they call, their historical mutual bond to flag the need for undoing the prevailing bitterness. The past bonhomie is illustrated through ‘centuries’ co-existence’ under the shade of *Kashmriyat*, a term that mysteriously surfaced and got currency after the Pandit migration. Analysts and writers are not off the mark when they allude to this ‘historical cordiality.’ However, what is not emphasized in such discourses is that the cordiality between the two communities, representing 95 per cent population on the one side and 4 per cent on the other, has more to do more with the moral fibre of the former than with the “spirit of accommodation and amity of a peace-loving and non-violent” minuscule minority.³⁸ The majority community nurtured and sustained this cordiality, irrespective of returns. A calm and minority-friendly Kashmir amidst communal frenzy on its borders in 1947, perhaps, explains the point best.

The displacement of nearly an entire community is an unfortunate spin-off of the developments unfolding in Kashmir in 1989. Ever since, the return of migrant Pandits has remained a focal point in any talk on the Kashmir situation. At one point in time, it looked just round the corner but, over a period of time, has now become a complex issue. There are many reasons, one of which is that a large number of migrants have sold their properties and settled outside Kashmir. Second, the post-migration generation, born and brought up outside its borders, feel no emotional attachment with the Valley. They are successfully pursuing their careers in different cities of India and abroad and would at best like to visit the land of their forefathers as tourists once in a while. Still, there is a large majority of migrant elders who would like to return at any cost. For them, even a quarter of a century’s separation from their motherland has not been able to kill the desire to go to eternal sleep in its lap. They are the worst sufferers of this tragedy. Unfortunately for them, some self-professed leaders, few among whom had moved out of Kashmir in search of greener pastures years and decades before

the mass migration in 1990, are making their return difficult, if not impossible. These activists write, debate and speak on their behalf in a language and manner that further complicates the issues. They leave nobody in doubt about their objective being perpetual estrangement between the two communities of Kashmir. The vilification campaign launched by these self-serving people has left even the diehard optimists disillusioned about the early return of Pandit migrants. Television studios and social networking sites, on which these debates are conducted, are causing more damage to the cause of mutual amity than serving it. Instead of minimizing the prevailing trust deficit between the two communities and building an atmosphere where the migrants could return to the warmth of their erstwhile neighbours, the atmosphere is poisoned by raising controversial and contentious issues and quoting fake statistics. The demand for a separate Hindu homeland and exclusive Hindu settlements in Kashmir and holding every single member of the majority community responsible for the plight of migrant Pandits all but assist in creating a helpful environment for early homecoming of the displaced community.

The migration of population from Kashmir under the fear of gun is not a one-community-alone development. If Pandits moved out in tens of thousands, hundreds of Muslim families associated with pro-India political parties also migrated under similar circumstances. Only they do not figure in the migration narrative. Their trials and tribulations did not find any mention in the reports of human rights groups, official dossiers or TV panel discussions. Journalist Rashid Ahmad observes:

The grim reality, however, is that while Pandits found support from all corners, including government and civilians, everywhere outside the Valley, the Muslim families were left in lurch in streets. Rehabilitation camps were set up and free ration and other facilities were given to Pandit migrants (which they genuinely deserved) besides making special arrangements for the education of their children. Different state governments reserved seats in medical and [other] professional colleges for Pandit students. Muslim migrants, on the other hand, were ignored equally by the government and the commoners. They had to piece together their lives by themselves... Pandits are not the sole custodian of Indian-ness in Jammu and Kashmir. If India is still in Kashmir, it

is just because of Farooq Abdullah, Omar Abdullah, Mehbooba Mufti, Ghulam Nabi Azad, Saifuddin Soz and their companies. They are holding Indian flag here. While Pandits chose to run away to save their lives, the NC, PDP and Congress cadres took bullets on their chests but did not change. Their funerals were boycotted, and their families had to face social isolation.³⁹

Nobody would dispute the fact that in a situation as sensitive as Kashmir, selective mention of tragedies will all but bridge the trust gap. Understanding and recognizing each other's pain and suffering is crucial for achieving this. Alongside a reference to Nadimarg, Wandhama and Sangrampora, a mention of Gawkadal, Sopore, Handwara and Islamia College is imperative to complete the picture of Kashmir's tragedy. Talking about Girija Tikoo, victim of a heinous crime, without a mention of Kunan Poshpora makes an incomplete landscape of horror in Kashmir. What befell on the uprooted Pandits in torn out tarpaulin tents in Jammu can be better understood by an equal measure of appreciation, if not more, of the torment associated with crackdowns, indiscriminate firing, summary killings, custodial disappearances and rapes in Kashmir. Opposition to the withdrawal of AFSPA, denigrating the martyrs of 1931, demanding separate Hindu homeland or settlements and harping on unsubstantiated cases of massive destruction of temples would impede rather than bring about reconciliation. For constructing bridges, it is important to view in the same context the uprooting of over 100,000 of Hindus in 1990 and as many or more Muslims forced to flee to Punjab before 1947 or about 500,000 hounded out of Jammu that year. Honouring the memory of over 200 Pandits killed since 1989 finds meaning with honouring the memory of tens of thousands of Muslims felled during the same period in Kashmir or 237,000 of them massacred in different parts of Jammu province on the eve of the Partition. Holding Sikandar culpable for the destruction of temples is an incomplete narration of Kashmir's history without recounting the locking of mosques and turning those into stables and granary stores by Sikh and Hindu rulers. The violence against and annihilation of Buddhism and its religious places in the ancient Kashmir is also important to be brought into the context in any deliberation on religious intolerance existing 'since centuries.'

Nobody holds the Pandit community responsible for all the tragedies befalling the Muslims in Kashmir. In the same manner, Kashmiri

Muslims as a community did not manufacture the torment of their Hindu brethren. The slogan shouting from mosque loudspeakers during 1990 finds a new context when viewed as spontaneous response to State repression instead of a conspiracy to chase the Pandits away. It continued even after the Pandits had left Kashmir. In fact, during the massive public demonstrations in 2008, 2010 and 2016, mosques across the Valley reverberated with *azadi* and Islamic slogans for weeks and months to generate widespread protests. There were literally no Pandits to be chased away by these slogans. In fact, the Muslim protesters were not the only ones to use mosque loudspeakers. During 1990s, even army and paramilitary troops frequently used these to announce crackdown of an area and directing people to come out for identification parade and house searches. Whatever be the level of mistrust, there is no denying the fact that Kashmiri Muslims want the Pandits back amongst them, not as protected souls in barbed-wired settlements but as next door neighbours sharing each other's joy and sorrow. Nobody expects them to side with the Muslim separatist movement in Kashmir as historically they have never associated themselves with the majority community's politics. The only experiment made in 1939 in the dissolution of the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference and establishment of a secular Jammu and Kashmir National Conference failed soon after as its Pandit members deserted the party one by one.

In the last 26 years, lot of water has flown through the Jhelum. The two communities not living as neighbours any longer have emotionally drifted from each other, leaving the vacant space to be filled by bitterness. Notwithstanding this, the Muslims of Kashmir want and look forward to the Pandits living with them as before. There are hopeful signs to build on the prospect of their return. No Kashmiri Muslim leader—whether from separatist, pro-India or militant camp—has spoken against the Pandits as a community or objected to their homecoming. Neither is anybody in Kashmir waiting with daggers and guns for the returning migrants. For the past many years, thousands of them annually visit the shrine of Ragini Devi at Kheer Bhawani where Muslims extend them warm hospitality. Many Pandits visit the Valley to attend marriage ceremonies or other functions or simply as tourists. None of them was harmed or waylaid by 'Islamist fundamentalists'.

Makhan Lal Bhat's homecoming is an inspirational story. A reluctant migrant, Bhat, returned to his home in Kashmir after

moving from Srinagar to Jammu, Delhi and Mumbai to find a foothold. Today, his family, the only from the minority community at Shankarpura in a South Srinagar suburb, is happily living among their erstwhile Muslims neighbours, some of whom share with him a common family-root. In June 1990, at the peak of militancy when all other Pandits in the neighbourhood had already left, Bhat felt scared when one evening some unidentified men tried to scale his boundary wall. The family migrated to Jammu, leaving behind their house and an established business in silk weaving. After reaching Jammu, they realized that they had nowhere to go. Most of the migrant Pandits had already arrived in the city and occupied whatever little spaces they could get. The family found itself landed in a wasteland where even a drop of water was hard to find, not to speak of a shelter. For the fear of being bitten by snakes on the ground, they spent umpteen nights on the roof tops of *kothas* of Muslim Gujjars. It was under such harsh conditions that a Kashmiri Muslim friend came searching for them and offered his house at Talab Tiloo to live in.

Back home, Bhat's vacant house and that of his brother was occupied by security forces. One day, an erstwhile neighbour from Shankarpura telephoned him to convey how the presence of a paramilitary camp in the midst of residential houses had caused inconvenience to them. Bhat rushed back to Kashmir, ran from pillar to the post, used his influence with whoever mattered in the government and got the buildings vacated. A couple of years later, he decided to end his 'exile'. The homecoming was celebrated by hosting a *wazwan* to which he invited his neighbours and friends. In his sixties now, Bhat has turned to spirituality. He is a believer in fate and God's control over it. He recalls hardship of living in wilderness of Janipora under an open sky where poisonous reptiles were frequent visitors, and God's mercy in the person of his Kashmiri Muslim friend who gave him keys to his house with a telephone facility in Jammu. He believes that the two communities in Kashmir have suffered alike and identifies some of his very rich Muslim acquaintances who too had to run away from Srinagar and live a broke life outside Kashmir. "If you are kind to people God will be kind to you," sums up his philosophy of life. Situated opposite to the temple in his compound, the local mosque's signpost *Jama Masjid Ahl-i-Hadith Salfia*, Shankarpura trashes allegations of Islamization

of names of places in Kashmir. Incidentally, the *Ahl-i-Hadith* or the *Salafist* are branded as hardcore Muslims, and Shankarpura was once considered a stronghold of militants.

Sita Ram Sokhal is another from umpteen positive stories that people outside Kashmir rarely get to know. Before leaving Srinagar at the height of militancy, Sokhals, the owners of famous Shakti Sweets at the Regal Chowk, handed over control of the shop to their employees who managed it for 25 years until 2015 when the family returned. The erstwhile employees were reluctant to part with the shop doing an annual business of about ₹25 crore. The local traders' association quickly swung into action and had the shop returned to Sokhals.⁴⁰ Sita Ram, whose ancestors had been brought to Kashmir by Pratap Singh, gratefully acknowledges the efforts by his "Muslim brothers" in getting back his family business. He believes that there never existed in Kashmir any bad blood between Muslims and non-Muslims, not even during the peak of militancy, and that attempts to "malign Kashmiri Muslims" for the exodus of non-Muslims from the Valley were unfortunate.

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40. *Greater Kashmir*, 3 February 2016.

Glossary

<i>aarti</i>	Hindu worship in which light from wicks soaked in ghee (purified butter) or camphor is offered to one or more deities; <i>aarti</i> also refers to the songs sung in praise of a deity
<i>agrahara</i>	a quarter of a village inhabited by Brahmins
<i>akhara</i>	arena
Allama	honorary title given to highest scholar
<i>Amir-e-Kabir</i>	great leader
<i>anna</i>	a coin, sixteen of which made a rupee
<i>ashrafi</i>	gold coin formerly used in Persia and India
<i>auqaf</i>	endowment
<i>azadi</i>	freedom
<i>azan</i>	call for prayers
<i>badmash</i>	urchin
<i>Bakarwals</i>	a tribe of nomadic goatherds and shepherds
<i>begar</i>	corvee or unpaid forced labour
<i>bhatta</i>	local name of Kashmiri Hindus
Brihaspati	Sun
Brahman or Brahmin	upper caste Hindu
<i>chakdari</i> system	a government scheme prevalent during the Dogra rule under which uncultivated or waste land was allotted on easy terms

<i>charpoys</i>	a traditional cot used in the Indian subcontinent
<i>chinars</i>	<i>Platanus orientalis</i> , grown abundantly in Kashmir
<i>chowki</i>	seat, a police <i>chowki</i> is a police post
<i>chowkidar</i>	a watchman or a gatekeeper
<i>Daftari-Diwani</i>	office of the <i>Diwan</i> or minister
<i>Darbar</i>	royal court
<i>devabhasha</i>	divine language; Kalhana described Sanskrit as such
<i>dhaba</i>	eatery
<i>Dharma</i>	something established or firm, path of righteousness
<i>dharamshala</i>	a Hindu religious rest-house
<i>dharmamatha</i>	religious hospice
<i>Dharmarth</i>	Hindu endowment
Diwali	festival celebrated to commemorate Hindu god, Ram's return from 14-years of exile
<i>dwaarpati</i>	incharge of border areas
Eid	Muslim festival
<i>fakir</i>	mendicant
<i>ghar waapsi</i>	literally, meaning return to one's home; RSS is using the term to describe its programme of reconversion of non-Hindus who it alleges were forced to convert to Islam and Christianity in the past
<i>gotra</i>	clan, descendants in an unbroken male line from a common male ancestor
Gujjars	a nomadic community of shepherds
<i>guru</i>	spiritual guide
<i>haakim</i>	ruler or officer
<i>halaal</i>	Islamic way of slaughtering animal for food by invoking Allah's name
<i>Harkara</i>	government agent for revenue collection
<i>hartal</i>	shutdown

Hindutva	a term used for the right-wing Hinduism
<i>Idgah</i>	large ground where Eid prayers are offered
<i>Imam</i>	leader of Muslim congregational prayer
<i>Iftaar</i>	the evening meal eaten by Muslims at the sunset to break the daylong fast during the month of Ramadhan
<i>jagir</i>	land grant bestowed by a ruler
<i>jagirdar</i>	feudatory grantee
Janmashtami	birthday of Hindu god, Sri Krishna
<i>jazya</i>	tax levied by Islamic State on adult, free and sane non-Muslim subjects in return of taking responsibility of their security; women, children, insane, elders, monks, hermits and slaves were exempted
<i>jhatka</i>	Hindu way of slaughtering animal for food
<i>kalima</i>	oral declaration of entering into the fold of Islam
<i>Kashmiriyat</i>	a term used to signify the age-old composite culture of Kashmir; the term gained currency after the mass migration of Kashmiri Pandit from Kashmir
<i>kavya</i>	verse
<i>kawji</i>	a Muslim who cremates bodies of Kashmiri Pandits
<i>kayastha</i>	official class
<i>khanqah</i>	hospice
<i>kharwar</i>	a donkey load
<i>khatri</i>	tradesman
<i>khutba</i>	mandatory sermon delivered by <i>Imam</i> on Friday or Eid prayers
<i>kothas</i>	humble dwellings of nomadic Gujjars
<i>langar</i>	community kitchen
<i>lathi</i>	baton
<i>lathicharge</i>	baton charge

<i>lingam</i>	phallus or stalagmite
<i>Lukikasamvat</i>	Kashmiri calendar in olden days
<i>Madarulmiham</i>	a high ranking administrator equivalent to prime minister
<i>madrasa</i>	school
<i>mahant</i>	the chief priest of a temple
<i>Mahaparinirvana of Tathagata</i>	Great nirvana of the Buddha
<i>Maharaja</i>	king or ruler
<i>mahatmya</i>	a guide book of a Hindu shrine
<i>mahrah</i>	short form of maharaja
<i>mandir</i>	temple
<i>mashaal</i>	torch
<i>matha</i>	monastery
<i>mirwaiz</i>	chief cleric
<i>mlechhas</i>	foreigners or impure, as Muslims were called by early Brahman chroniclers
<i>Mufti Azam</i>	Grand Mufti
<i>mujahid</i>	a Muslim warrior
<i>Mushaira</i>	poetic symposium
<i>Naara-e-Takbeer</i>	an Islamic slogan in response to which the crowd shouts <i>Allahu Akbar</i> (Allah is Great)
<i>Nanakshahi</i>	the ruling currency of the Sikh Empire
<i>naga</i>	snake
<i>naib-tehsildar</i>	revenue official-in-charge of an administrative unit called <i>niabat</i>
<i>naqqar khana</i>	drum house or orchestra pit during ceremonies
<i>Narayana</i>	Hindu god
<i>nawab</i>	Muslim ruler of a princely state
<i>nikah</i>	solemnization of Muslim marriage
<i>Panda</i>	Brahman priest who maintains genealogy of Hindu families
<i>pargana</i>	an administrative unit in old times
<i>patwari</i>	village revenue official
<i>pheran</i>	a loose gown worn by Kashmiris during winter

<i>prajapati</i>	god
<i>prasad</i>	food offering made at a temple and later distributed among the devotees
<i>prayopavesana</i>	hunger strike
<i>puja</i>	prayer
<i>pujari</i>	priest
<i>pundit</i> or <i>pandit</i>	scholar of Hindu scriptures
<i>purohit</i>	priest
<i>Raj Bhawan</i>	Governor's House
<i>Raja</i>	ruler
<i>rakhi</i>	ornamental wristband a Hindu girl or women on the festival of Raksha Bandhan ties on the wrist of her brother or a person that she regards as a brother
<i>rasm</i>	custom, practice
<i>Rasm-e-Patwari</i>	a kind of bribe charged by a <i>Patwari</i>
<i>rasoi</i>	cuisine
<i>Ravana</i>	the 10-headed ruler of Lanka (present Sri Lanka) whom the Hindu epic Ramayana describes as the king of the <i>rakshasa</i> or demons
<i>roti</i>	bread
<i>sadhu</i>	mendicant
<i>Sadr-i-Riyasat</i>	under the Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir, the Head of the State was known as <i>Sadr-i-Riyasat</i> ; in 1964, through an amendment, the nomenclature was changed to Governor
<i>sahibkar</i>	a senior administrator
<i>samadhi</i>	memorial built upon a cremation site
<i>Sangam</i>	confluence of rivers
<i>sargoal</i>	a government agent for revenue collection
<i>satyagraha</i>	non-violent resistance
<i>satyagrahis</i>	persons who practise <i>satyagraha</i> or non-violent/civil resistance

<i>shahr ashob</i>	lament of a city; it is an Urdu phrase to describe the grief felt for a city's fall or change in its ethos
<i>Shaivite</i>	follower of Shiva
<i>shakdar</i>	an agent employed by the government to keep vigil on crops lest tillers take away few grains for their use
<i>shankh</i>	conch
Sharda or Sarda	local script used in old days in Kashmir
<i>Shariah</i>	Islamic code
<i>Shivala</i>	Shiva's abode, a religious structure
<i>Shiva lingam</i>	Shiva's stalagmite
Shivratri	religious festival celebrated by Kashmiri Hindus with fervour
<i>shudi</i>	reconversion to Hinduism
<i>Subedar</i>	chief of provincial administration
<i>suttee</i>	a Hindu funeral custom, now banned, where a widow immolated herself on her husband's pyre
<i>takht</i>	throne
takht-e-sulaiman	Solomon's throne
<i>tarakardar</i>	a government agent for revenue collection
<i>taranga</i>	literally meaning wave; book in the contest of the <i>Rajatarangini</i>
<i>tehsildar</i>	revenue official-in-charge of an administrative unit called <i>tehsil</i>
<i>tirtha</i>	shrine
Tonga	horse-driven cart
<i>tongawalla</i>	horse-driven cart driver
<i>Turuska</i>	Turks or Muslims
<i>Vais'navi</i>	vegetarian Hindus
<i>varna</i>	characterization
<i>vihar</i>	a Buddhist monastery
<i>vir</i>	brave person
Vishnu or Visnu	Hindu god

Wazir	minister
<i>wazir-i-wazarat</i>	chief administrator of a division
<i>wazwan</i>	a multi-course traditional Kashmiri cuisine served at weddings and special occasions
<i>yaksa</i>	nature spirit who is considered to be the custodians of treasures that are hidden in the earth and in the roots of trees
yatra	pilgrimage
<i>yatri</i>	pilgrim
<i>zaildar</i>	feudal title of revenue collector of an administrative unit called <i>zail</i> extending between two and forty villages
<i>zamindar</i>	owner of large tracts of land
<i>zuhar</i>	midday Muslim prayer

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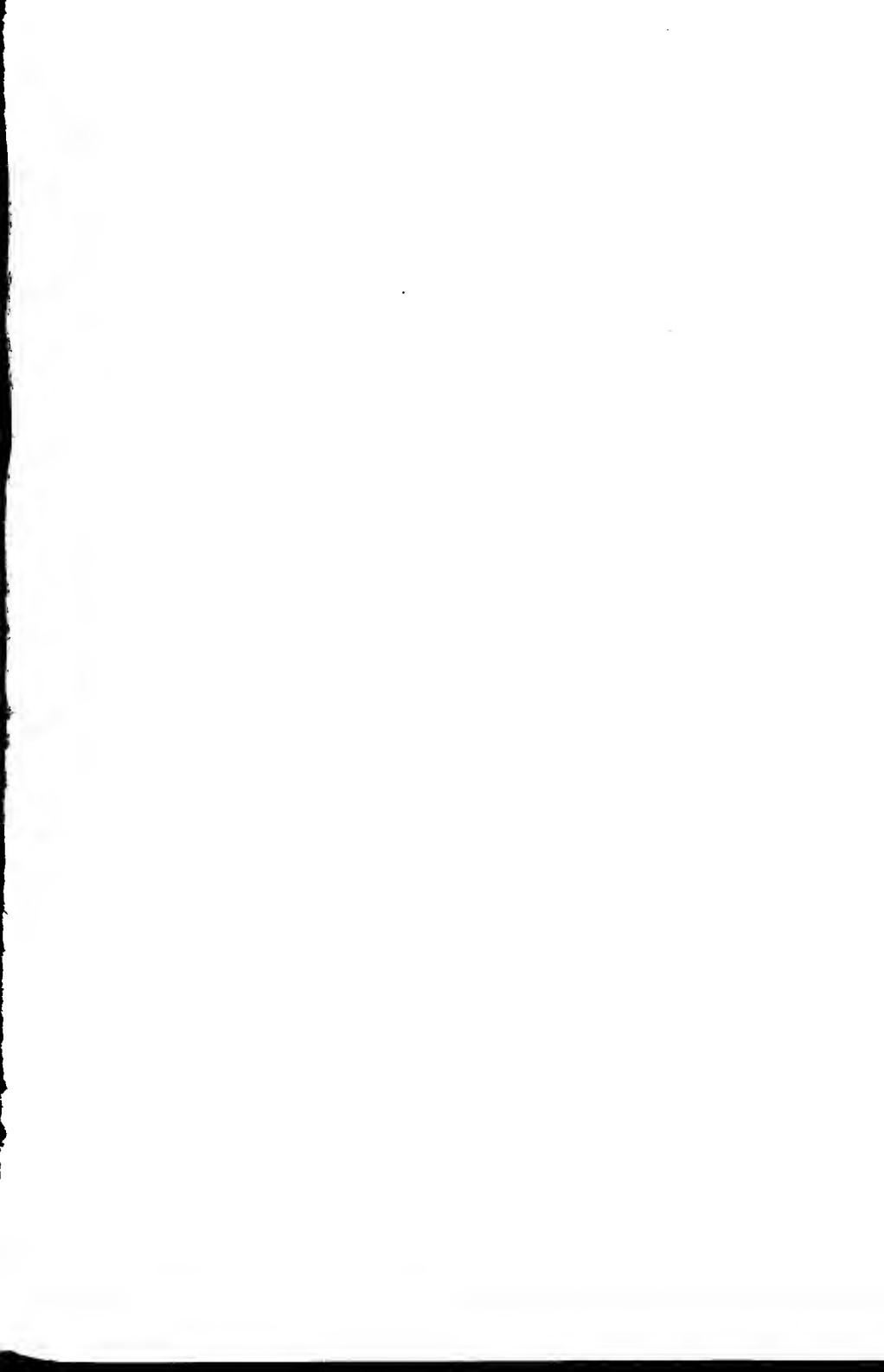
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The advent of Islam in medieval Kashmir gave birth to a narrative that describes forcible mass conversion of Hindus, eviction of aborigines and wanton demolition of religious symbols. A minority of Kashmiri Brahmins and their progeny who did not convert to Islam built and successfully perpetuated this narrative over the centuries. In the course of time, new elements were added to it. Following the eruption of armed insurgency in Kashmir and mass migration of Kashmiri Pandits in 1990, this community narrative has turned into the Indian mainstream view on Kashmiri Pandits.

Kashmir: Exposing the Myth behind the Narrative challenges the existing narrative through historical facts and cross-referencing. It exposes many fallacies used to uphold this narrative and dissects the work of historians that has sustained ahistorical perceptions over a long period of time. The book links history to the present and facilitates an understanding of the situation today.



KHALID BASHIR AHMAD is a former Civil Servant from the Kashmir Administrative Services.

₹ 595

ISBN 978-93-860-6280-2

A standard linear barcode representing the ISBN number 978-93-860-6280-2.

9 789386 062802